



Nearly 9 Crimes a Day in Goa in 2025

Over 3,200 offences registered in a year; rape and kidnapping cases remain in triple digits

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: The Goa government has reported that a total of 3,243 criminal cases were registered across the State in 2025, according to the official data tabled in the Goa Legislative Assembly.

The information was provided by Chief Minister and Home Minister Dr Pramod Sawant in



a written reply to an Unstarred Legislative Assembly Question (LAQ No. 107) moved by MLA Vijai Sardesai.

As per the crime statistics for the last five years (2021–2025),

KEY POINTS

- GOA RECORDED OVER 3,200 CRIMES IN 2025, AVERAGING NEARLY 9 CASES A DAY
- RAPE AND KIDNAPPING CASES REMAIN IN TRIPLE DIGITS; CYBERCRIME SHOWS SHARP RISE
- GANG ASSAULTS RARE, BUT ONE POLICE STATION ASSAULT CASE REPORTED AND UNDER PROBE

serious offences such as rape, kidnapping, murder, and cybercrime have shown fluctuating trends.

In 2025 alone, 102 rape cases, 103 kidnapping and abduction cases, and

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from the Union Ministry of Education following recent amendments to the Right to Education (RTE) framework.

State officials clarified that while the Centre amended the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules in December 2024, the no-detention policy has not been formally withdrawn. In the absence of clear directions from the Union government,

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Entertainment Circuit Link Emerges In Double Murder Of Russian Nationals In Goa

Team Goemkarponn

MANDREM: Investigators in Goa are widening the scope of their inquiry into the killing of two Russian nationals, examining possible connections within the State's event and entertainment ecosystem as they piece together the sequence of events that led to the murders.

Police officials said the accused, Alexei Leonov, and the two victims — Elena Kastanova and Elena Vaneeva — appear to have intersected professionally through performance-based engagements linked to weddings and private events. Law enforcement agencies are now tracking

contacts with event planners, venue managers and individuals who may have hired them for performances.

Senior officers said the investigation is focused on reconstructing travel patterns, social interactions and professional associations to identify inconsistencies and potential triggers behind the crime. Police are also examining whether the trio was engaged independently or through intermediaries.

Leonov, who has been residing in India for the past two years, has allegedly admitted to killing both women. However, officials stressed that his

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"I Am a Karyakarta, Nitin Nabin Is My Boss": PM Modi Welcomes BJP's Youngest National President

■ Forty five year old leader takes charge, signalling generational shift and organisational focus ahead of key elections

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday congratulated Nitin Nabin on assuming charge as the National President of the Bharatiya Janata Party, calling himself a party worker and describing the new chief as his boss. The remark underlined the BJP's emphasis on organisational discipline

and collective leadership as Nabin formally took over the party's top post.

At 45, Nitin Nabin has become the youngest leader to head the BJP and the 12th person to hold the position. He succeeds Jagat Prakash Nadda at a time when the party is preparing for several crucial state elections this

year and next, as well as laying the groundwork for the 2029 Lok Sabha polls. His elevation is widely seen as a signal of generational transition and renewed focus on strengthening the party organisation from the grassroots upward.

Nabin's appointment was uncontested and backed by the party's



senior leadership. He brings nearly two decades of political and organisational experience, having risen through the ranks of the BJP's youth wing in Bihar.

Roads, Water Kill. No Accountability: Rahul Gandhi Flags Urban Failures After Noida Tragedy

■ Tech professional's death sparks debate on governance lapses, safety gaps, and delayed rescue response

New Delhi: The death of a young software professional in Noida has triggered a sharp political response and renewed scrutiny of urban infrastructure and administrative accountability. Congress MP Rahul Gandhi described the incident as a stark example of what he termed India's "urban collapse", arguing that such tragedies stem not from lack of resources or technology but from a failure of responsibility.

The remarks followed the death of 27 year old Yuvraj Mehta, who worked in Gurugram and lived in Noida. On Friday night, while returning home amid dense fog, Mehta lost control of his vehicle near Sector 150. Poor visibility and a sharp right turn led his car into an unmarked roadside ditch nearly 20 feet deep and filled with water. The stretch reportedly had no barricades, warning signs, or lighting to alert motorists to the hazard. Trapped



inside the submerged vehicle, Mehta struggled for a prolonged period while awaiting help. Unable to swim, he reportedly remained in the water for close to 90 minutes and even managed to call his father in panic, informing him that his car had fallen into a drain. Despite the

proximity of the incident to residential areas and major roads, rescue efforts were delayed. The incident has raised serious concerns about emergency preparedness and the condition of urban infrastructure in rapidly developing regions close to the national capital.



Uniformity or Freedom: What should Universities Really Stand For?

Vijai Sardesai's opposition to uniforms in colleges has reignited a debate that goes far beyond dress codes. When the Goa Forward Party chief said universities are not schools and young minds should not be controlled, he was making a political statement, but also a philosophical one. At its core, his argument challenges how India understands higher education and the role of students within it.

Sardesai's resistance to college uniforms stems from his belief that universities must function as spaces of autonomy. In his view, students at the higher education level are adults, capable of making choices and bearing responsibility for them. Enforcing uniforms, he argues, reflects a lack of trust in young people and an urge to regulate rather than engage. For him, individuality is not a threat to education but a prerequisite for independent thinking.

This perspective resonates with the traditional idea of a university as a place where identities are shaped and ideas contested. Unlike schools, colleges are meant to expose students to the diversity of thought, background, and experience. Clothing, while not the most important form of expression, is often the most visible. Restricting it can signal an institutional discomfort with difference. Sardesai's emphasis on students as "stakeholders" reflects a growing demand that universities treat learners as partners in the academic process, not passive recipients of rules.

There is also a practical argument embedded in his stance. Higher education is supposed to prepare students for life beyond campus, where decision-making, self-regulation, and negotiation of social norms are essential skills. Shielding students from freedom until graduation can be counterproductive. Critics of uniforms argue that learning to manage choice is itself part of education, and that universities should guide this process rather than suppress it.

Yet, the case for uniforms cannot be dismissed as

“This perspective resonates with the traditional idea of a university as a place where identities are shaped and ideas contested. Unlike schools, colleges are meant to expose students to the diversity of thought, background, and experience. Clothing, while not the most important form of expression, is often the most visible. Restricting it can signal an institutional discomfort with difference. Sardesai’s emphasis on students as “stakeholders” reflects a growing demand that universities treat learners as partners in the academic process, not passive recipients of rules.

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mere authoritarianism. Many educators and administrators defend uniforms on the grounds of equality. In campuses marked by sharp economic differences, clothing can quickly become a symbol of privilege. Students from poorer backgrounds may feel pressured to match fashion trends they cannot afford. Uniforms, supporters say, reduce visible class divisions and create a sense of belonging that transcends income and background.

There are also concerns about decorum and academic focus. Some believe that a uniform or strict dress code reinforces the seriousness of the

learning environment and minimises distractions. In professional courses, uniforms are often justified as early exposure to workplace expectations, where dress codes are common and sometimes mandatory. From an administrative perspective, uniforms also make identification and campus security easier. Sardesai's opposition implicitly challenges these arguments by questioning whether enforced sameness is the right way to achieve equality and discipline. His position suggests that universities should address inequality through financial aid, counselling, and inclusive policies, not by regulating appearance. While this is an appealing ideal, it assumes institutions have the resources and intent to tackle deeper structural issues, which is not always true.

The debate also raises a crucial question about governance. Who should decide what students wear? When rules are imposed from above without consultation, resentment is almost inevitable. Universities that claim to promote democratic values must reflect them in everyday decision-making. If dress codes are necessary, students should have a meaningful role in shaping them. Sardesai's remarks strike a chord because they echo a wider frustration with paternalistic policies that ignore student voices.

A middle path may be more realistic than absolute positions. Instead of mandatory uniforms, universities could adopt flexible dress guidelines that ensure dignity and inclusivity without erasing individuality. Such policies, if developed through dialogue, could balance freedom with sensitivity to social realities.

Ultimately, Sardesai's opposition to uniforms is less about clothing and more about control. It forces institutions to confront an uncomfortable question. Do they see students as adults capable of judgment, or as children who must be managed? The answer will shape not just what students wear, but what kind of citizens universities hope to produce.

LETTERS

Traffic chaos at Porvorim during flyover construction

The ongoing flyover construction at Porvorim has turned daily commuting into a test of patience and endurance for thousands of residents. While infrastructure development is necessary, the manner in which traffic is currently being handled reflects poor planning and little regard for the public.

During peak hours, traffic comes to a near standstill on the NH66 stretch and adjoining internal roads. What should be a 10-minute drive often takes over 45 minutes. Office-goers, students, ambulance drivers, and public transport users are all bearing the brunt of the chaos. The lack of clear signage, frequent changes in diversions, and inadequate presence of traffic personnel have only worsened the situation.

What is particularly concerning is the absence of effective traffic management during critical hours. Road narrowing, heavy machinery movement, and unregulated parking around the construction zone create daily bottlenecks. Residents are rarely informed in advance about changes in traffic flow, leaving commuters confused and frustrated.

Development cannot come at the cost of public convenience and safety. Authorities must ensure proper planning, deploy sufficient traffic police, install clear directional boards, and consider night-time construction to minimise disruption. Temporary service roads and strict enforcement against illegal parking are also urgently needed.

Porvorim is a vital junction connecting several parts of Goa. If corrective steps are not taken immediately, the situation is bound to deteriorate further. Citizens deserve better coordination and accountability during such major infrastructure projects.

- Aryan D'Sa, Pomburpa

TONY HAS GONE BUT WILL BE FONDLY REMEMBERED

Very saddened by the demise of our dear Ribandar brother Tony Gonsalves. Always so very outspoken, who would never mince words, jovial, hale, and hearty except in the last few months while he was unwell, but endured it all.

A proud son of our Ribandar and an ex-student of Ribandar's Bal Bharati Vidyamandir. A fervent sports lover who partook in all our traditional festivities. We never missed an occasion to party.

Tony was a self-made man. He worked for many years in Bombay, after which he moved to the Gulf until he retired. He worked hard with a sense of focus and determination. Tony was kind, humble, and considerate to all. A God-fearing man who lived by the teachings of his beliefs and did justice during his stint in this world, while now moving to God's Kingdom.

In Tony's demise, I have personally lost a dear friend of many decades with only good memories to cherish. Rest in peace, dear Tony, until we meet again.

- Aires Rodrigues, London

Lifesavers Rescue Eight From Drowning, Thwart Theft Attempt at Betalbatim Beach

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: Drishti Marine lifesavers rescued eight persons from drowning incidents across Goa's coastline over the weekend, while also foiling a theft attempt at Betalbatim beach. In addition, lifesavers administered first aid to two individuals and successfully traced two missing children on different beaches.

At Ashwem beach, a 64-year-old woman tourist from Pune was rescued after experiencing difficulty in the water. Lifesaver Chandrakant Devji responded using a rescue tube, with support from Darpan Revankar on a jet ski, and safely brought the woman to shore.

At Anjuna beach, a 24-year-old male tourist from Mumbai was caught in a rip current about 60 metres offshore. Lifesaver



Vinod Salekar carried out a swift rescue and brought the tourist safely back to land.

At Baga beach, an 18-year-old male tourist from Delhi was rescued after struggling in the water. Lifesaver Suvarbh Kumar used a rescue board to bring him safely ashore. At the same beach, a four-year-old boy from Pune was reported missing. A coordinated search operation was launched, and the child was traced at another stretch of the beach by lifesaver Biliyam

Surim and reunited with his guardians after verification. At Candolim beach, two male tourists aged 14 and 20 from Hyderabad were caught in a sudden flash rip current while swimming. Lifesavers Sunil Matondkar and Rohit Kandulna responded using rescue tubes and safely rescued both. At the same location, a 17-year-old teenager from Kazakhstan sustained a deep cut on his left foot, and lifesavers on duty administered first aid. At Bainha beach, a

five-year-old boy from Uttar Pradesh suffered a jellyfish sting on his leg. Lifesaver Yallappa Chalwadi promptly provided first aid.

At Betalbatim beach, a Russian woman tourist reported her bag stolen while she was in the sea. Lifesaver Ganesh Mesta, who had earlier noticed a suspicious individual, followed and apprehended the suspect. The stolen bag was recovered and returned to the tourist. At Agonda beach, three adults from Saligao—two men aged 35 and 40 and a 37-year-old woman—were caught in a rip current and began drowning. Lifesaver Datta Velip entered the water and secured two victims, while Pralhad Velip rescued another using a jet ski. With assistance from another lifesaver using a surfboard, all three were safely brought ashore.



Agra Youth Held With Drugs Worth Rs 4.31 Lakh at Colomb, Canacona

Team Goemkarponn

CANACONA: A 29-year-old man hailing from Agra, Uttar Pradesh, was arrested on Monday evening for allegedly possessing drugs worth Rs 4.31 lakh at Colomb in Canacona.

According to Canacona police inspector Pravin Gawas, the accused, identified as Deepu Singh, who is presently employed at a restaurant in Ourem, Palolem, was caught red-handed with a substance suspected to be charas.

The arrest was made during a search operation conducted near a mosque at Colomb by a police team led by PSI Vishal Velip.

Police have registered the case under Section 20(b)(ii)(B) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985. The accused has been taken into police custody for further investigation.

Further investigation in the case is being carried out by Canacona PSI Ajit K Velip.

Minor Kidnapped From Ponda, Police Launch Probe

Team Goemkarponn

PONDA: Ponda police have registered a case of kidnapping following a complaint lodged by a resident of Ponda, originally from Maharashtra, whose name has been withheld.



lawful guardianship at Ponda.

Police have registered an offence under relevant sections of law and have initiated an investigation to trace the minor and identify those involved.

Further investigation is being carried out by PSI Sushant Gaonkar of Ponda police station.

Unidentified Woman Found Dead on Railway Track Near Vasco

Team Goemkarponn

VASCO: An unidentified woman was found dead on a railway track near the IOC junction, close to MPT 9 Gate in Vasco, on January 18, 2026.

According to police sources, at around 9.47 am, Vasco police received a phone call from the PCR Margao control room stating that a caller had reported a dead body lying on the railway track heading towards the MPT 9 Gate near the IOC junction. Acting on the



information, police rushed to the spot and found the body of an unknown female, estimated to be between

35 and 40 years of age. Police observed that the woman's head and one hand were amputated, indicating

that she was run over by a train.

During the scene panchanama, a tattoo was noticed on the right forearm of the deceased bearing the inscription "KARANSINGH KI PATNI PUSHPADEVI," which may help in establishing her identity.

The body has been preserved at the South Goa District Hospital, Margao, for further medico-legal formalities and identification.

Further enquiry in the case is being conducted by PSI Mayur Sawant of Vasco police station.

42-Year-Old Labourer Declared Dead at CHC Kakoda

Team Goemkarponn

CURCHOREM: A 42-year-old labourer was declared dead after being brought to the Community Health Centre (CHC) at Kakoda, Curchorem, on January 19, 2026.



As per police sources, at around 11.55 am, the medical officer of CHC Kakoda informed police

that Ranthu Mahto (42), residing near Apollo Pharmacy in Curchorem and originally hailing from Gumla district in Jharkhand, was brought to the health centre by a 108 ambulance in an unresponsive condition and was declared dead on arrival. Police visited CHC Kakoda and conducted enquiries with Balchandra Naik, who identified the deceased as his labourer. An inquest panchanama was carried out, and the body has been preserved at CHC Kakoda for further medico-legal formalities.

Man Held for Trespass in Restricted Defence Area at INS Hansa

Team Goemkarponn

VASCO: A case of criminal trespass has been registered at Vasco police station following a complaint by Lieutenant Commander P. Nithin, Commanding Officer of INS Hansa, Dabolim. According to the

complaint, the incident occurred on January 18, 2026, at around 10.45 am, at the DVOR area of Varunapuri within the INS Hansa premises. The accused, identified as Mohidin Shaikh, a resident of Katem, Bainha, Vasco, allegedly trespassed into the defence land, which

is a restricted area, with the intention to commit an offence.

Police have registered the offence under relevant sections of law. Further investigation in the matter is being carried out by Head Constable 5445 Saish Ajgaonkar of Vasco police station.



MMC approves hike in medical allowance, extends benefits to temporary staff

Team Goemkarponn

MORMUGAO: The Mormugao Municipal Council (MMC) on Monday held a council meeting during which several key decisions relating to staff welfare and civic facilities were taken.

Briefing the media, MMC Chairperson Girish Borker said the medical allowance for fixed staff, which had been pending since 2022, has finally been revised. The council approved an increase of ₹2,000, taking the allowance from ₹7,000 to ₹9,000. Borker said the decision would provide long-overdue relief to municipal employees.



He added that MMC has been the first municipality in Goa to grant special status to temporary workers. As part of this initiative, it has been decided to provide temporary staff with a medical allowance of ₹3,000. In addition, they will be covered under an insurance scheme of ₹10 lakh. "Temporary workers, especially garbage collectors, are our backbone. We are trying our best to support

them in every possible way," Borker said.

The council also discussed plans to set up a wet waste treatment plant at Sada. Borker said MMC would be the first municipality in the State to have its own wet waste processing facility and that the proposal has been finalised, with work expected to begin soon.

Another important decision taken during the meeting was the appointment of

maintenance contractors for the newly inaugurated Vasco fish market. Borker said the floors at the market can become slippery and require regular cleaning to ensure safety and hygiene. Maintenance contractors will also be appointed for the Sada market complex.

Borker further said councillors have been asked to inform residents about the two wellness centres recently inaugurated at Vasco and Sada by Health Minister Vishwajeet Rane. He said these centres can be used for minor health issues, reducing the rush at the Sub-District Hospital in Chicalim.



Food Safety Drive in Mapusa: Seven Establishments Shut for Unhygienic Conditions

Team Goemkarponn

MAPUSA: The Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) conducted a surveillance drive in Mapusa, targeting food business establishments near the Alankar Cinema Theatre area in Bardez, during which several violations related to hygiene and sanitation were detected.

During the drive, a total of 18 food business premises were inspected. Of these, seven establishments—including a cashew shop—were ordered to shut down after they were found operating in unhygienic and unsanitary conditions.

Officials stated that six of the food businesses were directed to stop

operations despite having been earlier trained on hygiene guidelines during previous inspections.

The remaining establishments were issued improvement notices and directed to rectify deficiencies within the stipulated time.

The inspection drive was carried out by Food Safety Officers Amit Mandrekar, Lenin Desai, Sneha Gaude, Sujata Shetgaonkar and Nausin Mulla, under the guidance of FDA Director Shweta Dessai and Designated Officer for North Goa, Richard Noronha.

FDA officials said such surveillance drives will continue across the state to ensure food safety standards are strictly followed and to safeguard public health.

Valpoi Student Selected to Represent Goa at 'Pariksha Pe Charcha 2026'

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: Master Shreejit Vaibhav Gadgil, a student of Dr K B Hedgewar High School, Valpoi, Sattari, has been selected to represent Goa at Pariksha Pe Charcha (PPC) 2026, an interactive initiative of the Hon'ble Prime Minister aimed at helping students deal with examination-

related stress and life challenges.

Pariksha Pe Charcha provides a national platform for students, teachers and parents to engage with the Prime Minister on issues related to examinations, stress management and holistic development. Over the years, the initiative has encouraged students to view examinations with

confidence and positivity, transforming exam stress into a celebration of learning. For PPC 2026, participants were shortlisted through an online Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) competition conducted on the official PPC portal from December 1, 2025, to January 11, 2026, for students from Classes VI



to XII, as well as teachers and parents. Extensive awareness programmes were conducted in schools across Goa through morning assemblies, classroom discussions, notice boards and school communication channels.



CISF to flag off second edition of Vande Mataram coastal cyclothon on January 28

Team Goemkarponn

VASCO: The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) will flag off the second edition of the CISF Vande Mataram Coastal Cyclothon—2026 on January 28, with the nationwide initiative focusing on coastal security awareness, national unity and community participation.

The cyclothon will be virtually flagged off

by Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai from Major Dhyen Chand National Stadium in New Delhi. Spanning 6,553 km over a period of 25 days, the event will see two CISF cycling teams simultaneously set out from opposite ends of the country's coastline — Lakhpat Fort in Gujarat on the west coast and Bakkhali in West Bengal on the east coast.

Clerk Hurt as Ceiling Gives Way at Pernem Govt Office, Spotlight on Unsafe Complex

Team Goemkarponn

PERNEM: In yet another incident pointing to the deteriorating condition of the Pernem government complex, a head clerk sustained injuries after part of the ceiling collapsed inside the Women and Child Development (WCD) office on Monday.

The injured staffer,



Sujay Gawade, was immediately taken to the Tuem Community Health Centre, where he

is receiving medical care. Officials said he is out of danger.

Deputy Collector of Pernem, Shivprasad Naik, expressed concern over the condition of the building, stating that structural weakness had been noticed at multiple locations within the complex. He revealed that the Public Works Department (PWD) had

22-Year-Old Nepali Drowns While Swimming at Agonda Beach

Team Goemkarponn

CANACONA: A 22-year-old Nepali national drowned while swimming at Agonda beach on Monday late afternoon.

According to police sources, the deceased has been identified as

Santosh Bista (22), a native of Nepal, who was working at a resort located along Agonda beach. He reportedly entered the sea in front of the resort for a swim late in the afternoon when he was suddenly swept into deeper waters due to strong



onlookers and his colleagues raised an alarm. Life-savers rushed to the spot and rescued him from the water in an unconscious condition. He was immediately shifted to the Community Health Centre (CHC), Chaudi, for medical treatment.

Paul John Single Malt Whisky Becomes Official Pouring Partner for 'Tribute to Human Bondage' Concert Series in Goa with Air India Express as Travel Partner

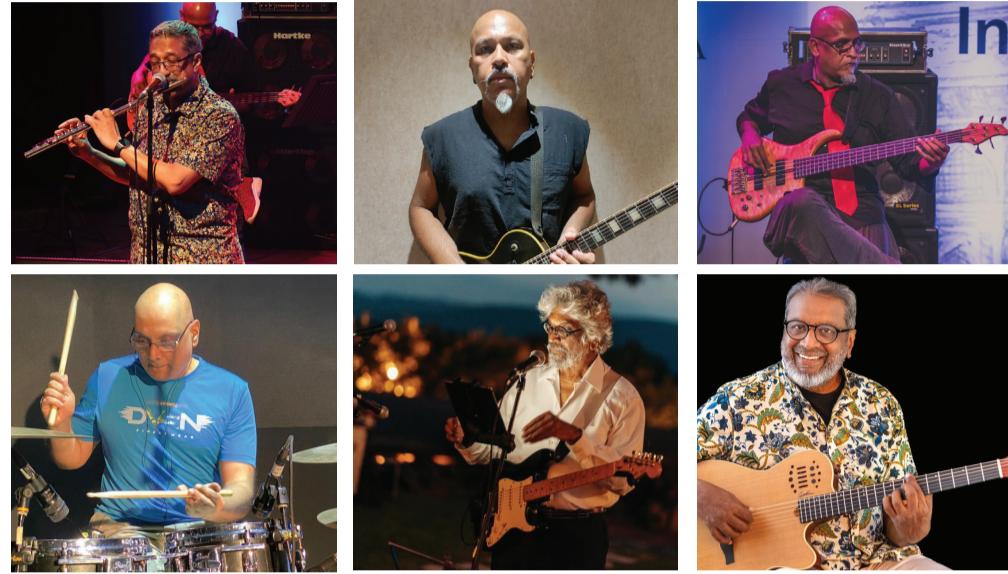
Goa, January 2026: India's rock legacy arrives in Goa as Henry Babu Joseph, founder member of the iconic 1970s rock band Human Bondage comes together with the contemporary sound of the Rajeev Raja Combine for an evocative, nostalgia-soaked concert series titled Tribute to Human Bondage Powered by Paul John Visitor Centre with Air India Express as Travel Partner.

This special musical tribute honours the legendary band Human Bondage with founder member Henry Babu Joseph coming together with the Rajeev Raja Combine - Rajeev Raja, Adrian D'Souza, Paul Santiago, Hitesh Dhotia and John Thirumalai. The event stands as a powerful celebration of live music in Goa, cultural nostalgia, and India's evolving contemporary music scene. The Goa leg of this multi-city tribute unfolds across three distinctive venues such as:

- 22 January 2026 | 9:00 PM onwards – Cohiba, Candolim
- 24 January 2026 | 7:30 PM onwards – Take 5, Candolim

- 25 January 2026 | 6:30 PM onwards – Goa Chitra Museum, Benaulim

Paul John Single Malt Whisky's association with Tribute to Human Bondage reflects the brand's deep connection with art, culture and craftsmanship. Much like fine whisky, music is shaped by patience, precision and authenticity. Every note carries intention, just as every cask of Paul John Single Malt Whisky carries character developed through tropical maturation in Goa.



This collaboration follows Paul John's strong cultural presence at the Serendipity Arts Festival Goa 2025, where the brand unveiled an immersive Paul John Experience Centre. The installation invited visitors to explore the art of whisky making in India – from Indian six-row barley and copper pot still distillation to cask ageing and blending. Designed as a sensory and storytelling space, the Experience Centre celebrated whisky as a cultural craft, aligning seamlessly with the festival's artistic ethos.

Talking about the tour, Rajeev Raja says, "Growing up, I had heard stories of the iconic band Human Bondage, which greatly inspired me. As a young musician, Babu Joseph, the band's vocalist, was also a mentor who encouraged me immensely. I'm delighted to be sharing the stage with the founder members of Human Bondage and bringing alive their music with my band, Rajeev Raja Combine. I'm grateful to Paul John Visitor Centre and Air India Express for supporting this initiative and helping celebrate the legacy of such a defining chapter in rock music."

At the Serendipity Arts Festival, Paul John Single Malt Whisky created a calm and contemplative environment for guided tastings and highball-led serves, encouraging audiences to slow down and connect with whisky as an art form. The space became a cultural landmark, reinforcing the idea that Indian single malt whisky belongs as much in creative spaces as it does in tasting rooms.

Through Tribute to Human Bondage, Paul John continues its commitment to supporting Indian music, live performances, art festivals and cultural storytelling. The partnership celebrates the shared language between whisky and music – both born from tradition, elevated by creativity and perfected through time.

From the Paul John Visitor Centre in Goa to international art and music platforms, the brand remains dedicated to representing India on the global luxury whisky stage. Rooted in Indian ingredients, tropical climate maturation and uncompromising craftsmanship, Paul John Single Malt Whisky is redefining how the world

experiences premium Indian whisky.

This association is a reminder that craft is culture, and culture is most powerful when it is experienced through authentic art, meaningful music and thoughtfully created spirits.

The series resonates with Air India Express's ongoing engagement with India's cultural landscape, reflected in its support for community-led art and music initiatives, including its role as Travel Partner for the recently concluded Hornbill Festival of Nagaland. The collaboration also reflects Air India Express's 'Tales of India' initiative, under which every new aircraft tail showcases indigenous art from across the country through distinctive livery, turning the airline's fleet into flying canvases that celebrate India's rich artistic heritage.

With music deeply ingrained in its brand essence, Air India Express sees this collaboration as a seamless extension of its sonic identity, created by BrandMusiq. Tribute to Human Bondage becomes a platform to nurture this relationship with music – one that goes beyond campaigns into sustained cultural partnerships.

Vande Bharat Sleeper Train: How India's First Semi-High-Speed Overnight Service Works

New Delhi: India has launched its first Vande Bharat sleeper train, connecting Howrah in West Bengal with Guwahati (Kamakhya) in Assam, as part of Indian Railways' efforts to modernise long-distance travel. The train is designed to make

journeys faster, safer, and more comfortable while supporting regional tourism and religious travel.

The service reduces travel time on the route by about 2.5 hours. It has 16 coaches: eleven 3-tier, four 2-tier, and one first-class AC, accommodating

a total of 823 passengers. Each coach is equipped with modern amenities such as padded berths, individual air ventilation, lighting, power sockets, sliding windows for privacy, and bio-vacuum toilets. Safety features include the Kavach system and emergency talk-back,



ensuring passengers can communicate in case of any issues.

Passengers will also receive premium linen kits

in all AC classes. These kits include a bed sheet, pillow with cover, wool-rich blanket, and hand towel. These measures are intended to enhance comfort and provide a premium experience comparable to modern hotel standards.

The fare structure

depends on the travel distance and class. AC 3-tier tickets cost Rs 960 for journeys up to 400 km, AC 2-tier fares start at Rs 1,240, and first-class AC tickets are around Rs 1,520. For longer trips nearing 1,000 km, fares range between Rs 2,400 and Rs 3,800.

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Nearly 9 Crimes a Day in Goa in 2025

27 murder cases were reported across the State.

The data shows that kidnapping and abduction cases have steadily increased over the years, rising from 52 cases in 2021 to 103 cases in 2025. Similarly, cases registered under the Information Technology Act rose sharply, with 121 cases reported in 2025, indicating a surge in cyber-related crimes.

Relying to a query on gang-related assaults, the government informed the House that two serious physical assault cases involving groups or gangs were registered between January 2022 and 2025.

These incidents were reported at Fatorda and Panaji police stations and were attributed to group rivalry and personal enmity. Both cases resulted in grievous or bodily injuries and are currently pending trial.

The Home Department also disclosed that one case of assault by police personnel inside a police station was registered during the same period. The incident occurred at Margao Town Police Station in October 2025, involving a PSI, and resulted in a head injury to the victim. The case is presently under investigation.

No-Detention Policy to Stay for Classes V, VIII in Goa Next Academic Year

Goa will continue with the existing no-fail system.

Education Secretary said that the State would maintain the current practice until the Centre issues specific instructions on how the amended rules are to be enforced. He emphasised that the recent changes do not automatically abolish the no-detention provision. "The Centre has modified the 2010 RTE Rules, but it has not done away with the no-detention policy. The implementation guidelines are still awaited," he said.

A notification issued by the Ministry of Education on December 16, 2024, amended the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules, 2010, giving States the authority to allow schools to fail students who do not pass year-end examinations. The gazette notification enables State governments to reintroduce regular examinations and detain students who fail to meet promotion standards, while also mandating remedial interventions to help students overcome learning deficiencies.

Entertainment Circuit Link Emerges In Double Murder Of Russian Nationals In Goa

statements are being treated cautiously due to repeated contradictions during questioning. While he has cited financial disagreements as the motive, police believe the circumstances surrounding the killings may involve deeper personal dynamics. Sources said behavioural observations during interrogation have raised concerns about Leonov's psychological profile. He allegedly told investigators that he targeted foreign nationals, largely fellow Russians, after gaining their trust. Officers said he described violent methods used in the killings, details that are currently being corroborated with forensic and circumstantial evidence. Investigators were further alarmed after Leonov reportedly claimed involvement in an additional killing outside Goa.



Infiltration Is a Major Security Threat, Must Be Dealt With Firmly: PM Modi

■ Prime Minister Calls for Identifying and Deporting Illegal Entrants, Warns Against Urban Extremism

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday described illegal infiltration as a serious threat to national security and said such elements must be identified and sent back to their country of origin. He asserted that no nation in the world tolerates illegal entrants and stressed that India cannot afford to do so either.

The Prime Minister made these remarks while



addressing a gathering at the ceremony marking Nitin Nabi's assumption of office as the new president of the Bharatiya Janata Party. Emphasising the gravity of the issue, Modi said infiltrators

not only compromise national security but also undermine the rights of the country's poor, youth and marginalised communities.

He noted that even some of the world's most powerful nations are conducting investigations to identify illegal migrants within their borders. India, he said, must take equally firm steps and ensure that those living in the country unlawfully are dealt

with strictly and lawfully. Identifying infiltrators and deporting them, he added, is an urgent necessity.

The Prime Minister also criticised political forces that, according to him, shield illegal entrants for vote bank considerations. Such practices, he said, weaken the nation from within and must be exposed before the public so that citizens understand the long term consequences.

India Warns Against Selective Pressure Over Ukraine, Urges Poland to Avoid Pakistan Support

■ Jaishankar Raises Trade Targeting and Terrorism Concerns During High-Level Talks in New Delhi

New Delhi: India has conveyed strong reservations to Poland over what it described as selective and unfair pressure linked to New Delhi's position on the Russia Ukraine conflict, while also cautioning Warsaw against any form of engagement with

Pakistan on issues related to cross border terrorism.

The concerns were raised by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during talks with Polish Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski in New Delhi. The meeting reviewed the expanding

India Poland Strategic Partnership and included detailed discussions on regional and global

developments amid what both sides described as a period of significant global uncertainty.

Jaishankar underlined that India has been repeatedly singled out through trade related measures and tariffs over its economic engagement with Moscow.

the two nations. The discussions reflected a mutual desire to expand collaboration in areas that deliver tangible benefits to people and businesses in both countries.

Prime Minister Modi described the meeting as warm and productive, noting that the talks covered a broad spectrum of issues aimed at reinforcing the multifaceted friendship between India and the UAE. The engagement reaffirmed the comprehensive strategic partnership that has steadily expanded in recent years. Several significant outcomes marked the visit.



“India Has Shown Willingness to Engage”: Poland Eyes Stronger Trade Ties with New Delhi

■ Warsaw looks to deepen economic ties with New Delhi amid tariff pressures and global trade shifts

New Delhi: Poland is actively seeking new trade partnerships in response to rising tariffs in parts of the global market, with India emerging as a key country willing to engage, Polish Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said during his visit to New Delhi.

Highlighting the broader economic context, Sikorski noted that Poland is looking beyond traditional markets as trade barriers increase elsewhere. He stressed the importance

of reinforcing global confidence in free trade and said India's openness to dialogue made it a natural partner in this effort. According to him, strengthening economic ties between India and Poland would also reinforce cooperation between India and the European Union as a whole.

The remarks come at a time when the European Union has faced higher import tariffs from some regions, prompting member states to diversify trade relationships.

‘National Anthem Disrespected’: Governor Walks Out of Tamil Nadu Assembly

■ RN Ravi Skips Address, Flags Governance, Safety and Democratic Concerns

New Delhi: Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi on Tuesday chose not to deliver the customary address to the State Assembly, walking out shortly after proceedings began. The decision followed his assertion that the National Anthem was disrespected when the Tamil anthem was played at the start of the session. A statement issued from Raj Bhavan said the National Anthem had once again been insulted and that a fundamental constitutional duty was disregarded.

According to the Governor's office, the situation inside the House deteriorated when he was allegedly prevented from speaking, with claims that his microphone was repeatedly switched off. Ravi offered a brief greeting in Tamil before leaving the Assembly,

bringing the opening session to an abrupt halt. The episode has further sharpened tensions between the Governor and the DMK government led by Chief Minister M K Stalin, just months ahead of the state Assembly elections.

Under established protocol, the Governor's address traditionally outlines the government's priorities and achievements. However, the Raj Bhavan statement said the prepared speech contained several unsubstantiated and misleading claims while ignoring pressing issues affecting the public. It questioned official assertions about large-scale investments, stating that many memoranda of understanding had not translated into actual projects and that the state's attractiveness

to foreign investors had declined in recent years. The Governor also linked his walkout to concerns over women's safety, pointing to a sharp rise in crimes, including cases under the POCSO Act and incidents of sexual harassment.

He further flagged the growing problem of narcotics and substance abuse among youth, alleging that the issue was being treated casually.

Other issues highlighted included rising atrocities against Dalits, increasing cases

of sexual violence against Dalit women, and a high number of suicides reported annually in the state. The statement described the situation as alarming and said it reflected administrative neglect.

Ravi also criticised what he described as declining education standards and mismanagement of educational institutions. He noted that thousands of village panchayats remain defunct due to delayed elections, denying citizens grassroots democratic rights. In addition, he raised concerns about temples being run directly by the state without trustees and the lack of implementation of court directions. Stress faced by MSMEs and the migration of entrepreneurs to other states were also cited.



“Committed to Fostering Economic Growth”: UAE President Wraps Up New Delhi Visit

■ Key agreements signed as India and UAE deepen strategic, economic, and defence cooperation

New Delhi: UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan concluded a brief but high-impact visit to New Delhi, underscoring the growing momentum in India UAE relations. During the visit, he held wide-ranging discussions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, focusing on strengthening bilateral cooperation across economic, strategic, and future-oriented sectors.

Both leaders reaffirmed their shared commitment to sustainable development and long-term economic growth, highlighting the deep historical ties and evolving partnership between

BCCI Plans Central Contract Revamp, Kohli and Rohit Likely to Move Down Grades

■ Scrapping of A+ Category Could Reshape Player Retainers and Contract Structure

New Delhi: The Board of Control for Cricket in India is considering a major restructuring of its central contract system, a move that could significantly alter how senior and emerging players are categorised and compensated. The proposed overhaul may see the elimination of the top A+ category, which has traditionally been reserved for elite all-format cricketers.

Under the new



framework, the central contract system would reportedly be streamlined into three tiers only: Grade A, Grade B and Grade C.

This proposal has been put forward by the men's selection committee led by Ajit Agarkar and is awaiting formal approval

from the BCCI's Apex Council.

If implemented, the changes would have a notable impact on some of Indian cricket's biggest names. Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, who have stepped away from Test cricket and T20 Internationals, are expected to be placed in Grade B. This would mark the first time in more than a decade that the two stalwarts would not feature in the top contract bracket.



However, with expectations soaring at home and the prospect of becoming the first team to successfully defend a World Cup title, his lack of runs has become a growing concern.

Suryakumar Yadav Faces Defining Leadership Test Ahead of World Cup

■ New Zealand T20I Series Set to Challenge India Captain's Form and Authority

New Delhi: India's five match T20I series against New Zealand, beginning Wednesday, arrives at a crucial moment for captain Suryakumar Yadav, offering a final high pressure rehearsal before the team

begins its World Cup title defence in less than three weeks. While India's results under his leadership have been impressive, the upcoming series places the spotlight firmly on the skipper's personal form

and influence. Since taking over the T20 leadership in 2024, Suryakumar has guided India to a win percentage exceeding 72 percent, masking his own struggles with the bat for a significant period.



"I Thought It Was Enough": Saina Nehwal Bids Farewell to Competitive Badminton

■ Olympic Medallist Ends Storied Career After Prolonged Battle With Chronic Knee Injury

New Delhi: Indian badminton icon Saina Nehwal has confirmed her retirement from competitive badminton, bringing an end to a remarkable career that helped redefine the sport in the country. The former world number one has been away from competitive action for nearly two years, largely due to a chronic knee condition that gradually made elite-level training and competition impossible.

Saina last appeared in a professional match at the Singapore Open in 2023 but chose not to make a formal retirement announcement at the time.

She explained that her decision to step away felt natural and personal, shaped by her physical limitations rather than by any specific moment or event. In her view, the absence from tournaments was itself a clear indication that her competitive journey had reached its conclusion.

The 2012 London Olympic bronze medallist revealed that severe cartilage degeneration and arthritis in her knees

played a decisive role in forcing her hand. The condition severely restricted her ability to endure the intense training schedules required to compete at the highest level. While elite badminton demands eight to nine hours of daily training, she found herself unable to train beyond one or two hours before pain and swelling set in.

Saina said she eventually reached a point where continuing no longer felt possible or sensible. With her body no longer responding as it once did, she felt it was time to stop pushing beyond her limits. The decision, though difficult, was one she described as unavoidable.

Her career had already been altered significantly by a serious knee injury sustained during the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.



Sports Ministry Orders SAI to Address India Open Lapses After International Backlash

■ Concerns Raised Over Venue Management, Player Safety Ahead of 2036 Olympic Bid

New Delhi: Following widespread criticism over organizational lapses at the India Open last week, the Sports Ministry has directed the Sports Authority of India (SAI) to implement corrective measures, according to reports. Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya convened a meeting with SAI officials on Monday to review the issues and demand a detailed action

plan. The tournament faced numerous disruptions that drew complaints from overseas players and sparked concerns about India's ability to host international events smoothly. Problems highlighted included bird droppings on the court, a monkey entering the spectator stands, and poorly maintained facilities such as washrooms and practice areas.

Sparkling Stars Shine in Finale to Secure Back-to-Back UBL Titles

■ Champions Stage Stirring Comeback to Overpower Asher's Smashers in UBL 6.0 Showdown

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: Sparkling Stars successfully defended their Ultimate Badminton League crown with a commanding 150–132 victory over Asher's Smashers in the grand finale of UBL Edition 6.0, held at the Indoor Stadium in Campal. The high-profile encounter brought the curtain down on a two-day tournament that featured around 200 players and highlighted the rising standard of badminton in Goa, alongside strong participation from outstation competitors.

Organised by Goa Sports Club in association



with Chicalim Badminton Club and under the aegis of the Goa Badminton Association, the league followed an intense group and playoff format. Sparkling Stars and Asher's Smashers emerged as the most consistent sides during the league stage, finishing at the top of the standings. Their first clash came in Qualifier 1,

where Asher's Smashers secured a convincing 150–133 win to book a direct spot in the final.

The road to the summit clash saw dramatic twists. Priority Titans scripted a thrilling comeback in the eliminator, overturning a 15-point deficit to edge past Flying Gravity 150–146. However, Sparkling Stars responded strongly

in Qualifier 2, defeating Priority Titans 150–123 to earn a rematch against Asher's Smashers in the final.

The title match itself was a contest of shifting momentum. Asher's Smashers dominated the early ties, racing to an 18-point advantage after the first three matches. The turning point arrived in the crucial fourth tie, where seasoned campaigners Kamlesh Kanji and Shamsudeen C.K. produced a decisive performance to erase the deficit and push Sparkling Stars into a slender lead.

Buoyed by loud home support, Sparkling Stars then took firm control.