



# When Savings Feel Unsafe, the Cooperative Ideal Begins to Crumble

The sudden revocation of the No Objection Certificate granted to the Tirumalla Tirupati Multistate Co-operative Credit Society has once again exposed a hard truth about cooperative banking in India. Even before any formal restrictions on withdrawals, panic spread across its Goa branches, with depositors rushing to secure their savings. That reaction alone says more than any official clarification ever could. It reflects a deep and growing loss of faith in the cooperative financial system.

Cooperative banks were never meant to inspire fear. They were built on trust, proximity and collective responsibility. For decades, they served as lifelines for farmers, small traders, self-employed workers and middle-class families who found mainstream banking either inaccessible or indifferent. The promise was simple. Your money was safe because the institution belonged to the community itself. Today, that promise rings hollow.

The Tirumalla Tirupati episode is not an isolated case. It comes against the backdrop of repeated cooperative bank failures in Goa and elsewhere. Depositors here still remember the collapse of urban cooperative banks that left savings frozen for years and, in some cases, wiped out entirely. Every new regulatory action, even when described as precautionary, reopens those wounds. The result is predictable. People panic first and ask questions later.

What makes cooperative bank investments particularly unsettling is their fluid and opaque nature. Unlike scheduled commercial banks, many cooperative institutions operate with weak governance structures, inconsistent audits and limited professional oversight. Their balance sheets are often difficult for ordinary depositors to understand, and regulatory intervention usually arrives only when damage is already done. By then, trust has evaporated.

In theory, regulation is meant to protect depositors. In practice, abrupt decisions such as NOC withdrawals or operational curbs tend to do the

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opposite. They send a signal that something is wrong, even if authorities insist otherwise. When communication is poor and transparency lacking, fear fills the vacuum. The Tirumalla Tirupati case illustrates this perfectly. The absence of clear, proactive reassurance turned a regulatory step into a trigger for panic.

The larger danger lies in what this does to the cooperative movement itself. If people begin to

see cooperative banks as inherently risky, they will move their savings elsewhere. This shift is already visible. Many depositors now prefer commercial banks or newer financial institutions that are perceived to be more tightly regulated. Once lost, this confidence will be extremely difficult to regain.

It is also important to acknowledge that deposit insurance, often cited as a safeguard, offers only limited comfort. For many families, cooperative banks hold lifetime savings that exceed insured limits. Even where insurance applies, the process is slow and emotionally draining. For a small saver, the mere possibility of losing access to hard-earned money for months or years is enough to abandon the system entirely.

The cooperative sector does not lack relevance. What it lacks is credibility. That credibility can only be restored through serious reform. Governance must improve, audits must be timely and transparent, and management must be professional rather than politically driven. Regulators need to move from reactive firefighting to continuous oversight. Most importantly, depositors deserve honest communication, not reassurances after panic has already set in.

Goa, with its long history of cooperative institutions, stands at a crossroads. Either the sector is strengthened through accountability and reform, or it continues its slow slide into irrelevance. Each new scare pushes it closer to the edge.

The anxiety seen at Tirumalla Tirupati branches should be treated as a warning, not an inconvenience. Savings are not abstract figures. They represent security, dignity and future plans. When people begin to feel that even community banks cannot be trusted with those dreams, the cooperative ideal itself is at risk of collapse. Restoring faith will take time and sustained effort. But ignoring the warning signs will ensure only one outcome. A sector built on trust will fade away, not with a single collapse, but with the quiet withdrawal of public belief.

## EDITOR'S SPEAK

### Mankurads and the myth of seasonal frenzy

Reports on the arrival of mankurads this season have drawn attention to their steep price of ₹7,200 per dozen, but the narrative around frenzy and exclusivity needs clearer context. These fruits are not being sold in bakeries nor are there long queues. They are available, as they traditionally have been, in local fruit markets, where buyers choose quantities according to their means. That said, the price itself cannot be brushed aside. At ₹600 a fruit, mankurads have effectively moved out of the reach of most ordinary Goan households. What was once a simple seasonal pleasure has now become a luxury item, affordable only to a few. This raises questions not about consumer obsession, but about deeper issues of supply, shrinking orchards, middlemen, and the economics of local agriculture. Seasonal fruits often command higher prices at the start of the season, but such extreme rates highlight how fragile Goa's local produce ecosystem has become. Instead of romanticising the costliness of mankurads or portraying them as objects of indulgence, the focus should shift to why local production has declined and why scarcity has become the norm. There is also a danger in equating high prices with cultural value. Goa's food traditions were built on accessibility and seasonality, not exclusivity. When local fruits turn unaffordable for locals, it signals a loss that goes beyond taste. Rather than sensationalising the price tag, this moment should prompt a serious conversation on supporting local growers, protecting orchards, and ensuring that Goa's seasonal foods remain part of everyday life, not symbols of privilege.

-Sydney Vaz, Taleigao

### Student deaths at BITS Goa demand urgent accountability

The recent death of yet another student at the BITS Pilani Goa campus, the sixth such incident in barely two years, is deeply disturbing and cannot be treated as routine or coincidental. An institution of national repute owes students and parents far more transparency and accountability than what is currently on display. Repeated fatalities within a closed campus environment point to systemic failures. Questions around student safety, mental health support, supervision and, most alarmingly, the possible presence of drugs on or around the campus must be addressed honestly. Whispered concerns among students and parents about substance abuse can no longer be ignored or brushed aside with vague assurances of "ongoing investigations". These are young lives entrusted to an institution that prides itself on academic excellence. Excellence, however, cannot be limited to classrooms and laboratories. It must extend to student welfare, counselling, early intervention and strict enforcement of zero tolerance towards narcotics. The silence or defensiveness of authorities only deepens public mistrust. At the very least, there should be an independent, time-bound inquiry into all recent deaths, with findings made public. The state government must also conduct a thorough probe into drug access and circulation linked to the campus, involving law enforcement, health experts and education officials. If serious lapses are found and corrective steps are not immediately implemented, the question of stricter regulatory action, including temporary suspension of admissions or administrative overhaul, cannot be ruled out. Institutional reputation cannot be allowed to outweigh student lives. Parents send their children to campuses like BITS with trust. That trust is now shaken. Restoring it requires decisive action, not silence.

-Sonia Deshmukh, Sancoale

# Police Say BITS Death Cases Delayed Due To Pending Forensic Reports

**Team Goemkarponn**

**Margao:** Investigations into multiple student deaths reported at the BITS Pilani Goa campus have not reached a conclusion due to delays in receiving crucial forensic reports, police and district officials have acknowledged.

Senior officials from the South Goa district administration and police stated that the absence of reports from the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) has slowed progress in several cases, preventing investigators from establishing definitive



causes of death and completing inquiries.

Authorities said that forensic findings are essential to confirm post-mortem observations and toxicology results, especially in cases where substances were detected during examinations.

Without these inputs, police have been unable

to move forward with final conclusions or file closure reports. The delay has affected multiple cases, including deaths reported over the past year, prompting concerns over prolonged investigations.

Officials clarified that the police have completed most procedural steps, but the lack of laboratory

analysis remains a major bottleneck.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has earlier stated that any final decision or official conclusion regarding the student deaths would be taken only after receiving comprehensive reports from the police and district administration.

The situation has highlighted the strain on forensic services and raised questions about the need to strengthen laboratory infrastructure to ensure timely delivery of reports, particularly in sensitive and high-profile cases



## Academic Year 2026–27 To Begin On April 1 For Classes VI To X, XII

**Team Goemkarponn**

**PANAJI:** The State government has decided to continue with the revised academic calendar for the academic year 2026–27, with classes for students from Class VI to Class X and Class XII scheduled to commence from April 1.

Primary classes from Class I to Class V will remain outside the revised system for yet another year, with their academic term set to begin on June 6, in line with the earlier practice. Class XI will also follow the June-to-March schedule.

The government has opted to continue enforcing the Rules framed under the Goa School Education Act, 1984, which were notified last year. Under these provisions, the academic year for Classes VI to X and Class XII will run from April 1, 2026, to March 24,

2027, while Classes I to V and Class XI will have their term from June 2026 to March 2027.

This will mark the second year of implementation of the revised calendar, which was introduced to bring State board schools in line with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) pattern that follows an April-to-March academic cycle.

As per the academic calendar issued by the Directorate of Education, the first academic term will extend from April 1 to October 10, followed by the second term from October 12 to March 24, 2027. Director of Education Shailesh Zingade said that although the academic year start date differs for primary classes, the structure of terms, vacations and holidays for Classes I to V will mirror those prescribed for higher classes.

# Govt Says Tirumalla Tirupati Co-Op NOC Revocation Meant To Protect Depositors

**Team Goemkarponn**

**Panaji:** Amid growing concerns among depositors and a rush to withdraw funds, the State government clarified that the withdrawal of the No Objection Certificate (NOC) granted to Tirumalla Tirupati Multistate Co-operative Credit Society Ltd was a precautionary step taken in the interest of investors.

Officials stated that the



decision followed a regulatory review and an inspection conducted by the Office of the Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Goa. The action

pertains specifically to the cancellation of permission granted to the society to operate and expand 13 branches in the State. Depositors have been given the choice to either withdraw their deposits or continue with their existing investments.

The NOC, earlier issued through official communications dated July 31, 2014, and June 28, 2018, enabling the society to expand its

operations in Goa, was revoked with immediate effect after the inspection reportedly revealed multiple irregularities. The society is headquartered in Mumbai and operates branches across Goa, Maharashtra and Karnataka. Registrar of Co-operative Societies Ashutosh Apte said the government's move was aimed at preventing potential losses to investors.

## Freedom Fighters' Pension Enhanced; Govt Assures Dignified Last Rites

**■ CM Pramod Sawant Chairs Welfare Committee Meet, Announces Hike In Pension And Allowances.**

**Team Goemkarponn**

**Porvorim:** Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Tuesday chaired a meeting of the Freedom Fighters Welfare Committee at Mantralaya, Porvorim, and held detailed deliberations on issues concerning the welfare, dignity and rightful entitlements of freedom fighters and their families.

In a significant decision aimed at strengthening support for freedom fighters, the state government enhanced the monthly Freedom Fighters' Pension from ₹9,000 to ₹12,000. The monthly allowance has also been



increased from ₹3,000 to ₹5,000. "The sacrifices made by our freedom fighters can never be repaid. It is our moral duty to ensure their dignity, welfare and rightful entitlements are protected," said Chief Minister Pramod Sawant.

As a mark of honour and respect, the government also decided that a Deputy Collector and a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) will mandatorily

attend the last rites of deceased freedom fighters and lay a wreath on behalf of the state government.

The Chief Minister assured members of the Freedom Fighters Welfare Committee that all genuine concerns would be addressed with sensitivity and priority. He stressed that close coordination with concerned departments would be ensured to uphold the dignity and legacy of freedom fighters.

## HC Partly Upholds Conviction Of Sisters In Assault On Minor Case

**Team Goemkarponn**

**Panaji:** The Goa Bench of the Bombay High Court has sustained the conviction of two sisters for causing injuries to a minor boy using an iron rod, while overturning their conviction on charges of intentional insult and offences under the Goa Children's Act.

Justice Shreeram Shirsat, while deciding a criminal appeal filed by Anita Naik and Kunda Naik, confirmed their guilt under Section 324 of the Indian Penal Code for voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous means, read with Section 34 relating to common intention. The court held that the prosecution had successfully established



that the minor suffered bleeding head injuries as a result of the assault.

The case dates back to June 4, 2011, when the child was allegedly attacked near a water tap outside his residence at Bhoma in Ponda. According to the prosecution, one of the accused verbally abused the boy while the other struck him with an iron rod. The injured child was subsequently shifted by ambulance to Goa Medical College, Bambolim, where his wounds required suturing.

While reassessing the evidence on record,

the High Court relied heavily on the statement of the injured minor and the supporting medical records. The court observed that the testimonies presented by witnesses in support of the victim were reliable and credible, even though they were related to him. It noted that a witness does not become unreliable merely due to familial ties if the evidence is otherwise convincing and consistent.

However, the court set aside the conviction of the appellants under Section 504 of the IPC for intentional insult and under Section 8(2) of the Goa Children's Act, 2003, finding insufficient grounds to sustain those charges.

# Nigerian National Held With Cocaine Worth ₹1.09 Crore In Canacona

■ Police Seize 219.9 Grams Of Cocaine During Raid At Kindlebago Hotel.

## Team Goemkarponn

Canacona Police arrested a Nigerian national in connection with a major narcotics seizure registered under Crime No. 11/2026 under Section 22(C) of the NDPS Act.

The accused has been identified as Onyeacholem Friday (47). Police said the arrest followed specific and reliable information, based on which a narcotics raid was conducted at Molyma Hotel, Kindlebago, Tarir,



Canacona, on February 4, 2026, between 12.13 pm and 2.36 pm.

During the raid, the accused was allegedly caught red-handed in possession of 219.9 grams of cocaine, valued at approximately ₹1,09,95,000.

Police also seized

a scooter bearing registration number GA 03 AS 1690, which was reportedly used to deliver the contraband to customers. The accused was formally arrested at 4.58 pm on February 4, 2026. The operation was carried out under the supervision of SP South Goa Tikam Singh Verma (IPS), SDPO Canacona Niles Rane, and PI Canacona Pravin P. Gawas. Further investigation is in progress.



# Rash Driving Case Registered After Car Collision On NH 66

■ Driver, Foreign National Passenger Sustain Grievous Injuries.

## Team Goemkarponn

Quepem: Cuncolim Police have registered a case of rash and negligent driving following a road accident reported on National Highway 66 at Karmalghat, Barcem, Quepem.

According to the state complaint lodged by HC-6922 Tukaram Velip of Cuncolim Police Station, the incident occurred on January 20, 2026, at around 10.10 am.

The accused, identified as Laxman Chalwadi, a resident of Zari, Zuarinagar, Sancoale, was driving a Maruti Suzuki WagonR car from Cuncolim towards Canacona.

Police stated that the

accused allegedly drove the vehicle in a rash and negligent manner, endangering human life, and upon reaching Karmalghat at Barcem, collided with a Ford Figo car that was proceeding from Canacona towards Cuncolim.

As a result of the collision, the driver of the Ford Figo, Ravibabu Kushbah, a resident of Delem, Canacona, and a passenger in the Maruti WagonR, Patricia Monique Loyant EP Amauger, a resident of France, sustained grievous injuries.

Further investigation in the case is being carried out by HC-6922 Tukaram Velip of Cuncolim Police Station.

## Team Goemkarponn

Sanguem: Sanguem Police have registered a case of rash and negligent driving following a road accident involving a car and a motorcycle at Varcotto, Sanguem.

According to the state complaint filed by HC-7210 Anand Gaonkar of Sanguem Police Station, the incident occurred on January 26, 2026.

The accused, identified as Rossario Rodrigues, a resident of Varcotto, Sanguem, was driving a Ford Fiesta car from Dando towards Cortalim. Police stated that the accused allegedly drove the vehicle in a rash and negligent manner,

# Fraudster Impersonating Pollution Control Board Official Arrested In Calangute

■ Accused Cheated Restaurant And Café Owners Of ₹9.59 Lakh By Posing As GSPCB Officer.

## Team Goemkarponn

Calangute: Calangute Police arrested a notorious fraudster for allegedly impersonating an official of the Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) and cheating business owners operating restaurants and cafés in the Calangute area. The accused has been identified as Suraj Pendse. According to police, Pendse approached the complainant by posing as a GSPCB official and



claimed to have detailed information about existing pollution control licences, including their capacity and expiry dates. He further falsely represented that the Collector's office had directed him to conduct checks on the complainant's licences.

By misrepresentation and false assurances, the

accused allegedly induced the complainant to make payments, cheating him of a total amount of ₹9,59,500.

During the course of investigation, police revealed that Suraj Pendse is involved in similar offences across the State of Goa, with multiple cases already registered against him. The accused has been arrested and produced before the Hon'ble JMFC Court, Mapusa, which remanded him to seven days of police custody.

# Colva Man Arrested for Alleged Sexual Assault on Minor in Cortalim

## Team Goemkarponn

VERNA: The Verna Police have arrested a resident of Colva in connection with the alleged sexual assault of a minor girl in Cortalim.

According to police reports, the complaint was lodged by the mother of the survivor. The



complaint states that the

alleged incident occurred between December 25, 2025, and December 28, 2025.

The complainant has alleged that the accused engaged in forceful sexual intercourse with her minor daughter without her consent at midnight during the mentioned period in Cortalim.

Acting on the complaint, the police apprehended the accused. The investigation is currently in progress and is being led by Lady Police Sub-Inspector (LPSI) Pramila Fernandes of the Verna Police Station. The police are conducting further inquiries into the matter.

# Rash Driving Case Registered After Car Hits Motorcycle In Sanguem

## Team Goemkarponn

Upon reaching Varcotto, the driver reportedly lost control of the car, swerved to the wrong side of the road, and collided with an oncoming Hero MotoCorp motorcycle.

As a result of the collision, the motorcycle rider, Shailesh Gaonkar, a resident of Vaddem Porteem, Sanguem, along with pillion rider Akshara Velip and excess pillion rider Master Aatish Velip, both residents of Uguem, Sanguem, were thrown onto the road and sustained injuries.

Police said that an unknown person gained entry into the shop by bending the shutter and

# Theft Reported At Fashion Shop In Margao

■ Unknown Person Breaks Open Shutter, Steals ₹40,161 Cash.

## Team Goemkarponn

Margao: Margao Town Police have registered a case of theft following a break-in at a fashion shop located at Pajifond, Margao.

According to the complaint lodged by Rainer Dias, a resident of Aldona, the incident occurred between 10.00 pm on February 2 and 9.00 am on February 3, 2026, at Cove Fashion Shop No. 05, Bemivinda Apartment, Pajifond Margao.

Police said that an unknown person gained entry into the shop by bending the shutter and



allegedly stole cash amounting to ₹40,161 from the shop's cash counter.

Further investigation in the case is being carried out by ASI Umesh Gawde of Margao Town Police Station.



# Investors in Canacona Rush Tirumala Tirupati Co-Op Branch After Govt Revokes NOC

## Team Goemkarponn

**Canacona:** A day after the state government revoked the operating permission of Tirumala Tirupati Multi-State Co-operative Credit Society Ltd, several investors rushed to its Canacona branch at Chaudi on Wednesday to seek clarity and file withdrawal claims for their deposits. From early hours, investors were seen crowding the



society's counter inside the branch, while several others stood outside the office premises, anxious about the safety of their investments. According to sources at the branch, many depositors demanded

immediate withdrawal of their funds following the government's action. The branch manager and staff assured investors that their money was safe and promptly issued prescribed withdrawal claim forms to those seeking to withdraw their deposits. Investors were requested to fill in their bank account details and submit the original deposit receipts or investment documents. The branch

manager assured that the withdrawal amounts would be transferred directly to investors' bank accounts through NEFT within two working days. In a relief to depositors, the branch manager also assured that no penalty or processing charges would be deducted, stating that the usual 2 per cent penalty applicable on premature withdrawals would be waived and the full deposit amount refunded.



## Youth Congress Delegation Meets DGP Over Growing Drug Menace In Goa

■ Memorandum Submitted Seeking Strict Action, Probe Into BITS Pilani Death Case.

## Team Goemkarponn

**Panaji:** A delegation of the Goa Pradesh Youth Congress on Tuesday met the Director General of Police (DGP), Goa, to raise serious concerns over the growing drug menace in the state, particularly in the hinterland areas. The delegation was led by Archit Naik, President of the Goa Pradesh Youth Congress, and included Swapnil Patil, IYC Goa

In-charge, Janardhan Bhandari, former General Secretary of the GPCC, Pralay Bhagat, District Youth Congress President, Vaishnav Pednekar, Youth Congress Vice President, and Navdeep. During the meeting, the delegation submitted a memorandum highlighting the alarming proliferation of drugs across Goa and urged the police to initiate strict and time-bound action against those involved in drug trafficking and peddling.

## CM To Inaugurate New Canacona Municipal Council Building At Chaudi

## Team Goemkarponn

**Canacona:** Chief Minister Dr Pramod Sawant will inaugurate the newly constructed three-storey Administrative-cum-Commercial building of the Canacona Municipal Council (CMC) at Chaudi on Friday. The announcement was made during a press meet held at the temporary municipal office at Char-Rasta by CMC Chairperson Laxuman Pagui, along with Vice-Chairperson Gandesh Madganvkar. The inauguration will take place in the presence of Urban Development Minister Vishwajeet Rane and Arts and Culture Minister as well as Canacona MLA Ramesh Tawadkar. The foundation stone for the new building was laid

in October 2020 by the then Urban Development Minister Milind Naik, to replace the old Portuguese-era municipal structure. However, the actual construction work commenced in 2022.

Constructed at a cost of approximately ₹11 crore, the modern building houses municipal offices, a conference hall, a 650-capacity hall, and commercial spaces including shops. According to municipal officials, the new premises will provide modern office facilities for municipal staff and improved services for citizens visiting the council for official work.



## Fine Likely For Hotels Failing To Submit Data On TIME Software

## Team Goemkarponn

**Panaji:** The Department of Tourism has warned hotels and other accommodation units of penal action for failing to submit mandatory data on the Tourism Information Management Enterprise (TIME) software. In a circular issued by the department, it has been stated that submission of required tourism-

related data on the TIME application is compulsory for all registered accommodation units, including hotels, resorts, homestays and guest houses. The software has been implemented for systematic collection and monitoring of tourism data across the state. The department observed that several establishments have failed to comply with

the mandatory data submission requirements despite repeated instructions, reminders and notices.

"In this regard, it is hereby informed that a fine will be imposed on hotels and accommodation units that have not complied with the mandatory data submission requirements on the TIME software, as per the applicable

rules and provisions," the circular stated.

Accommodation providers have been directed to ensure timely submission of data within the prescribed timelines, as notified by the department from time to time, to avoid penal action.

The circular has been issued with the approval of the Director of Tourism, Kedar A. Naik.



## Borim Bridge To Remain Closed For Traffic On February 8 Night

## Team Goemkarponn

**Ponda:** The Public Works Department (PWD) has ordered a complete closure of the Borim Bridge on National Highway-566 for vehicular traffic to facilitate remaining repair and rehabilitation works.

According to a notification issued by the Office of the Executive Engineer, Works Division XV (NH), Ponda, the bridge will remain closed from 8 pm on Sunday, February 8, 2026, to 8 am on Monday, February 9, 2026.

The closure is part of ongoing repair works on the Old Borim Bridge. While replacement of bearings has already been completed earlier with full closure and heavy vehicle restrictions, the riding surface of the bridge still requires Polymer Modified Bituminous (PMB) road

work. For this, complete road closure is necessary to ensure obstruction-free and speedy completion of the remaining rehabilitation works.

During the closure period, traffic moving in both directions between Ponda and Margao will be diverted through alternative routes, which will be determined in coordination with the Traffic Police.

The notification stated that prominent signboards indicating diversion routes and no-parking instructions will be displayed at strategic locations by the contracting agency. All necessary road safety measures, as per the latest guidelines of the Indian Roads Congress (IRC) and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), will also be implemented.



## Goan NSUI Leader Ahraz Mulla Leads Telangana Unit to 6-0 Clean Sweep at EFLU, Following NSUI's Recent 8-0 Success in Goa

## Team Goemkarponn

presence across university campuses nationwide.

This victory comes soon after NSUI's recent 8-0 success in Goa University elections, reflecting the growing momentum of the student movement across states and the expanding influence of NSUI across India.

The win also highlights the continued rise of NSUI under the vision of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who has consistently championed youth participation, student empowerment and social justice across the country.



# MakeMyTrip Introduces Women-Centric Safety and Assurance Signals in Stay and Bus Bookings

■ Using AI, user feedback and partner data, the platform is making key safety and reassurance cues more visible as women plan their journeys

**Gurugram:** MakeMyTrip, India's leading online travel company, is leveraging technology and user-generated content to help women travellers make more confident choices across accommodation and intercity bus bookings. The approach is informed by behavioural signals observed on the platform, which indicate a more deliberate review journey among women travellers, including higher click-through on reviews, greater time spent on maps and street view, and deeper engagement with guest-uploaded photos before confirming a booking.

These patterns are reinforced by booking behaviour. Women are booking 50 percent more stays at least 15 days in advance and show a 16 percent higher preference for premium and branded properties compared to men. This trend becomes more pronounced as women travellers move from Tier 1 to Tier 3



cities, where branded stays also function as a signal of assurance. On intercity bus routes, solo women travellers also tend to prefer seating arrangements that place them alongside other women rather than in mixed proximity.

When the platform detects that a woman may be planning a stay, key cues surface more prominently.

Ratings submitted by women are highlighted. AI led summaries bring forward cues such as staff behaviour and location safety during the stay search process. Additionally, women specific amenity indicators such as CCTV, door eye, door chains and full-length mirrors are surfaced more clearly to help travellers understand the safeguards in place at the property.

Travellers can also use the Street View option already available on the platform to visually assess the surrounding roads and approach to the property before making a decision.

For intercity bus journeys this same approach is being applied. AI identifies reviews from female only journeys and filters them by areas of concern such as punctuality, safety and cleanliness. Each attribute is assigned a sentiment tag, allowing women to assess feedback quickly and make a decision with greater confidence. When a woman books one side of a double berth the adjacent berth is automatically restricted to female only to avoid mixed proximity.

This enables a basic layer of assurance especially during overnight or long-distance journeys.

Rajesh Magow, Co-Founder and Group CEO, MakeMyTrip, said, "Women are already careful in planning their travel.

The usage patterns indicate how thoughtfully they evaluate both stays and travel routes. We are trying to make this trip planning process easier for them leveraging our rich data and AI so that they can take informed decisions."

Beneath this lies a dual effort. One layer draws from millions of reviews and user generated signals using AI to understand how women travellers evaluate their stays and travel routes.

The other comes from structured partner data across nearly 97,000 accommodation properties and more than 3,500 intercity bus operators, covering amenities, safeguards and operational practices.

Together they form the base that enables women to see their options more clearly.

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## Smart Metering Is Transparent And The Need Of The Hour: CEE Fernandes

comparatively advanced power infrastructure. Fernandes said smart meters would help both consumers and the electricity department understand usage patterns more clearly, reduce billing errors and strengthen accountability. "The system is very transparent and is the need of the hour," he added. Meanwhile, Power Minister Sudin Dhavalikar has assured electricity consumers that they will not be required to pay any amount for the installation of smart meters being rolled out under the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS). Dhavalikar said the smart

metering project, estimated at ₹890.11 crore, involves the installation of 7,50,356 smart meters across the State. "Consumers are not required to pay anything for the installation of smart meters. The entire cost will be borne through government funding and the project structure," the Minister said. He explained that the project is being implemented under the Advanced Metering Infrastructure Service Provider (AMISP) model, wherein payments will be made on a per-meter, per-month basis over a period of 93 months, instead of upfront capital expenditure.

the victim. Protesters said the incident has shaken the sense of safety in the locality and called for decisive measures to prevent such crimes. According to police, the accused allegedly gained the trust of the minor and sexually exploited her. He is also accused of threatening the victim by using photographs stored on his mobile phone to blackmail her into silence. Based on a complaint, police registered an offence under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences

(POCSO) Act. The accused was arrested and produced before the court, which remanded him to six days of police custody for further investigation.

During the protest, residents demanded that the accused be expelled from the village and the State, asserting that individuals accused of crimes against children should not be allowed to remain in the community.

Protesters urged the authorities to ensure a swift and transparent investigation and to send a strong message that crimes against minors will be dealt with firmly.



## Government Prevents Rs 8,189 Crore Cyber Fraud Loss in Four Years

■ Over 23 lakh complaints handled through national reporting system as Centre strengthens digital safety measures.

**New Delhi:** The central

government has prevented cyber criminals from stealing Rs 8,189 crore between 2021 and 2025 through timely intervention in more than 23.61 lakh reported cases.

The information was shared in the Rajya Sabha by the Minister of State for Home Affairs, who outlined the progress made under the Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System. The reporting platform, launched in 2021 under the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre, allows victims to immediately flag financial frauds so that transactions can be stopped before money is withdrawn.

Officials stated that the system has played a crucial role in freezing suspicious transfers and tracing fraudulent accounts, leading to significant savings for citizens.

Along with the online portal, the government has also operationalised the toll free helpline number 1930 to assist people in registering complaints.

The minister informed Parliament that more than 12.21 lakh mobile SIM cards and 3.03 lakh device identification numbers linked to cyber crimes have been blocked on the basis of reports received from police authorities across the country. As part of preventive efforts, a new mechanism called the Suspect Registry was introduced in September 2024 in partnership with banks and financial

institutions.

This initiative helps identify doubtful transactions at an early stage and prevents funds from moving into mule accounts.

According to the ministry, over 21.65 lakh suspect identifiers and 26.48 lakh first level mule accounts have already been shared with participating agencies.

The system has resulted in the rejection of transactions worth Rs 9,055 crore, further reducing potential losses.

Authorities emphasised that cooperation between law enforcement agencies, banks and telecom service providers has been critical in disrupting organised cyber fraud networks.

In another response to the House, the ministry said a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure was issued in January to create a uniform and victim focused framework for handling financial cyber crime complaints.

The guidelines aim to ensure faster coordination among different stakeholders and quicker relief for affected citizens.

Government data also showed a steady rise in registered cyber fraud cases, increasing from 14,007 in 2021 to 19,466 in 2023. While maintaining that policing remains primarily a state responsibility, the Centre reiterated its commitment to supporting states and Union Territories through training, technology support and national level coordination to tackle the growing threat of digital crime.



# India Has Full Freedom to Choose Its Energy Partners, Says Russia

**■** Moscow dismisses claims of pressure to alter New Delhi's long standing oil trade policy

**New Delhi:** Russia has stated that India remains completely independent in deciding where it purchases crude oil, stressing that New Delhi has always followed a policy of diversified energy sourcing. The Kremlin made it clear that buying oil from multiple suppliers is not a new approach for India and should not be viewed as a political shift. Officials in Moscow rejected suggestions that any external power could dictate India's energy strategy. Russian authorities were responding to recent remarks suggesting that India might replace Russian crude with supplies from other nations. The Kremlin emphasised that Russia has never been the sole provider of petroleum



products to India and that commercial decisions are based on economic interests. According to Moscow, cooperation in the energy sector continues to be stable and mutually beneficial. The Russian Foreign Ministry highlighted that the trade in hydrocarbons has helped both countries maintain balanced economic relations and has also contributed to stability in international energy markets. Moscow reiterated its willingness to expand collaboration with India in areas such as oil,

gas and refining. Officials noted that there has been no formal communication from New Delhi indicating any intention to discontinue purchases from Russia. Energy specialists pointed out that a sudden replacement of Russian crude would be technically and financially challenging for India. Russian oil is generally heavier and has different chemical characteristics compared to American shale varieties. Refineries in India are configured to process specific grades, and changing them would

increase production costs. Experts also observed that the United States may find it difficult to supply volumes equivalent to the large quantities currently provided by Russia. India depends on imports for nearly eighty eight per cent of its crude requirement, making supply security a major national priority. Russian shipments, which were minimal before 2022, increased significantly after global market disruptions. Although the volume has moderated in recent months, Russia continues to remain one of India's important energy partners. Analysts believe New Delhi will continue balancing purchases from various regions to protect its economic interests and ensure affordable fuel for domestic consumers.



## No Issues Found in Air India Dreamliner Fuel Switch Checks

**■** Airline completes fleet wide inspection after regulator seeks details on London departure

**New Delhi:** Air India has confirmed that inspections of the Fuel Control Switches on all operational Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircraft in its fleet have revealed no defects. The review was carried out after the United Kingdom Civil Aviation Authority sought clarification on how a Dreamliner was allowed to depart London despite concerns over a possible problem with the fuel switch mechanism.

The airline explained that the re inspections were conducted as a precaution after one of its pilots reported an observation during engine start. Engineers examined

the switches that control the flow of fuel to the aircraft engines and found them to be functioning normally.

According to the carrier, the checks were completed in line with recommended procedures and no irregularities were detected in any aircraft. The Aviation Ministry also stated that detailed tests were performed on both the left and right switches of the grounded aircraft.

The examination confirmed that the locking mechanism remained properly seated in the run position and did not slip to cutoff even when pressure was applied.

## Gas Tanker Accident Brings Mumbai Pune Expressway to Standstill for Over 31 Hours

**■** Massive traffic chaos leaves thousands stranded as overturned vehicle triggers long closure.

**New Delhi:** A major accident on the Mumbai Pune Expressway led to an unprecedented traffic disruption lasting more than thirty one hours after a tanker carrying propylene gas overturned in the Khandala Ghat section near the Adoshi Tunnel. The incident occurred on Tuesday evening and quickly resulted in one of

the longest traffic jams witnessed on the busy corridor, with vehicles stuck in queues stretching up to twenty to thirty kilometres. Drone visuals from the area showed

the three lane highway completely packed with cars, buses and heavy trucks moving at a crawl or remaining stationary for hours. Many commuters were forced to spend the night inside their vehicles without access to food, water or basic facilities. The disruption also affected public transport services, with state buses halted and supplies of

milk, vegetables and other essentials delayed in nearby cities. Soon after the tanker overturned, police closed traffic heading towards Mumbai and diverted vehicles to the opposite carriageway. However, the continuous leakage of gas from the damaged tanker prevented authorities from restoring normal movement.

## Mamata Challenges Poll Body in Supreme Court, Bengal Politics Heats Up

**■** Chief Minister's direct arguments before top court add new dimension to election season.

**New Delhi:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's decision to personally argue a case before the Supreme Court has generated intense political discussion in the state, with supporters viewing it as a bold stand and critics calling it political theatre. For

the first time in India's legal history, a sitting chief minister appeared as a party in person to challenge the Election Commission, making sharp allegations against the poll body. During the hearing before the Chief Justice of India, Banerjee accused the Election

Commission of acting unfairly towards West Bengal. She claimed that lakhs of voters were removed from the electoral rolls without being given an opportunity to submit required forms. According to her, the Special Intensive Revision process was being used



selectively against Bengal and micro observers had been appointed only in the state, a move she described as discriminatory. The eight minute intervention in the packed courtroom quickly became the centre of attention in Kolkata's political circles.



# Tilak Varma Grateful for Swift Comeback Ahead of T20 World Cup

■ Young all rounder credits BCCI and rehabilitation team as India finish preparations with strong win.

**New Delhi:** India all rounder Tilak Varma expressed surprise and gratitude after making an early return from injury, saying he did not expect to be back on the field so soon ahead of the T20 World Cup. The left handed batter thanked the BCCI and the Centre of Excellence for guiding his recovery and helping him regain match fitness in time for the global tournament. Tilak, who featured in India's warm up victory over South Africa in Navi Mumbai, said the atmosphere at the packed DY Patil Stadium filled him with confidence. Hearing the crowd chant his name as he walked out to bat was a special moment, he admitted, and it strengthened his belief that he was

ready for the challenge ahead. The youngster described playing in front of such enthusiastic supporters even in a preparatory match as an unforgettable experience.

Inspired by the aggressive intent shown by his teammates, Tilak produced a quickfire innings that underlined his readiness. He said watching the fearless batting of players around him motivated him to play his natural

attacking game. The team environment, according to him, felt energetic and positive, reinforcing the sense that India are well prepared for the World Cup campaign.

India opted to bat first and delivered a dominant batting display. Ishan Kishan set the tone with a blazing 53 off just 20 balls, while Abhishek Sharma provided strong support as the openers raced to 80 for



one inside the powerplay. Both retired out to give opportunities to others, allowing the middle order to continue the momentum.

Tilak struck 45 from only 19 deliveries and added a rapid partnership with captain Suryakumar Yadav. Later, valuable contributions from Axar Patel and Rinku Singh, along with a sensational ten ball 30 from Hardik Pandya, carried India to an imposing total of 240 for five. South Africa's reply never gathered real pace after Arshdeep Singh removed George Linde for zero. Aiden Markram and Ryan Rickleton attempted a recovery with a steady stand, but wickets at crucial moments pushed the visitors onto the back foot.



## Dubai Royals Crowned Champions After Dominant Final Chase in Goa

■ Shikhar Dhawan led side becomes first champions of World Legends Pro T20 League.

**Team Goemkarponn**

**Panaji:** Dubai Royals lifted the trophy in the inaugural World Legends Pro T20 League after defeating Pune Panthers by eight wickets in an impressive final at the 1919 Sportz Stadium in Goa. The Royals produced a composed run chase to overhaul a challenging target and secure a memorable triumph, bringing the curtain down on a highly competitive ten day tournament.

After winning the toss, Pune Panthers elected to

bat and began confidently against the Dubai spin attack. Openers Martin Guptill and Upul Tharanga built a strong foundation with a 100 run partnership, scoring freely in the powerplay and middle overs.

Tharanga played a steady knock of 55 before Parvez Rasool delivered the first breakthrough. Guptill continued his aggressive approach and reached 62, but leg spinner Piyush Chawla struck twice in quick succession to dismiss him and captain Kieron Pollard.

## India Officially Bids for 2031 AFC Asian Cup Hosting Rights

■ Six nations in race for continental tournament as India renews long standing ambition.

**New Delhi:** The Asian Football Confederation has officially confirmed that India is among the countries bidding to host the prestigious AFC Asian Cup in 2031. The continental governing body listed India along with Australia, Indonesia, Korea and Kuwait as individual bidders, while Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have submitted a joint proposal.

The United Arab Emirates, which had earlier shown interest, has withdrawn from the process. In a statement, the AFC said the bidding procedure for the 2031 edition was completed last year and attracted strong participation from across Asia. The confederation also revealed that invitations for the 2035 edition were circulated in August 2025,

with the submission window closing at the end of December. The next stage will involve coordination with member associations for detailed documentation and evaluation. The All India Football Federation had submitted its Expression of Interest to host the tournament last year, signalling a renewed push to bring Asia's biggest football competition to



the country for the first time. Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya had soon after announced full government backing, stating that staging major international events would strengthen India's global sporting profile and support its broader ambition of hosting the 2036 Olympic Games. India has never hosted the Asian Cup despite earlier attempts.

## YMCA Knights display experience and unity to claim Veterans crown

■ Knights overpower Siolim Basketeers with commanding second half performance to secure All Goa title.

**Team Goemkarponn**

**Panaji:** YMCA Knights were crowned champions of the Veterans All Goa Basketball Tournament after defeating Siolim Basketeers by 44 to 25 in an entertaining final that highlighted skill,

experience and teamwork. The contest began on an even note, with both sides matching each other in pace and intent. Siolim Basketeers held a narrow 20 to 19 lead at the interval, showing sharp movement and accurate shooting in the



opening stages. The match changed completely after the break as the Knights raised the intensity of their game. Their defence became tighter and more organised, forcing errors from the opposition and creating fast scoring opportunities. The

veterans from YMCA used their years of experience to control the tempo, patiently building attacks and dominating the boards. What had looked like an evenly balanced contest in the first period gradually turned into a one sided affair.



## Pakistan May Invoke Force Majeure Over T20 World Cup Boycott

■ BCCI dismisses argument as weak while ICC faces potential diplomatic standoff

**New Delhi:** Pakistan is reportedly considering invoking the force majeure clause to avoid sanctions from the International Cricket Council if it refuses to play its T20 World Cup match against India on February 15. The provision is generally used to cover unforeseeable circumstances that prevent a contractual obligation from being fulfilled, and the Pakistan Cricket Board is said

to be exploring it as a last option. If Pakistan withdraws from the fixture, tournament rules state that India would be awarded two points and the PCB could face heavy financial penalties. According to sources, the board may attempt to justify the decision by citing instructions from the Pakistan government, arguing that the situation is extraordinary and beyond its control.

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