



Goa Police Record Spike In NDPS Convictions, Foreign Nationals Jailed And Deported

■ Drugs Worth Over Rs 78 Crore Seized In 2025 As Enforcement, Surveillance And Prosecution Intensify

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: Goa Police registered a significant rise in convictions under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act in 2025, with official data revealing that 35 cases ended in convictions during the year. Among the major outcomes, a Nigerian national was sentenced to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment, while



four foreign nationals were deported following the completion of legal formalities. Police officials said the foreign nationals, who hailed from Russia, Lebanon, Nigeria and the

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35 NDPS CASES ENDED IN CONVICTIONS IN GOA DURING 2025

- ▶ NIGERIAN NATIONAL SENTENCED TO 10 YEARS OF RIGOROUS IMPRISONMENT
- ▶ FOUR FOREIGN NATIONALS DEPORTED AFTER COMPLETION OF LEGAL PROCESS
- ▶ 163 NDPS CASES REGISTERED IN 2025; DRUGS WORTH RS 78.48 CRORE SEIZED
- ▶ 212 ACCUSED ARRESTED, INCLUDING 32 FOREIGN NATIONALS
- ▶ IN 2024, 162 CASES REGISTERED WITH SEIZURES WORTH RS 9.91 CRORE



FIR Against Pharma Firm for Supplying Fake Snake Anti-Venom to DHS

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: Goa Police have registered an FIR against a pharmaceutical distribution company based in Santa Cruz for allegedly cheating the Directorate of Health Services (DHS) by supplying fake snake anti-venom to the government.

Police said the firm misrepresented the manufacturer of lyophilised snake anti-venom and used imitation labels and packaging to pass off the product as genuine. Based on these representations, the DHS placed a purchase order worth ₹14.9 lakh with the company.

However, the consignment was later

found to be spurious during scrutiny, prompting the authorities to lodge a complaint. An offence has been registered at the Panaji police station under sections related to cheating and copyright violations. Meanwhile, officials from the Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) have seized 1,080 vials of the suspected fake anti-venom from the firm's premises. Samples of the seized stock have been sent to a laboratory for detailed analysis to ascertain their contents and safety. Further investigation is underway to determine the source of the spurious drug and whether similar supplies were made elsewhere.

RBI keeps repo rate steady at 5.25 percent after Union Budget

■ Central bank signals stable outlook while raising inflation projections slightly

New Delhi: The Reserve Bank of India has decided to maintain the repo rate at 5.25 percent in its first monetary policy announcement following the Union Budget 2026. The decision was taken during the three day meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee, which reviews the country's financial and economic conditions every two months.

RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said the choice to hold the key lending rate was in line with expectations, given the steady growth momentum and easing concerns over global trade tensions after a recent agreement with the United States. He noted that the international development was positive for India, which continues to remain among the fastest growing major economies.

The central bank also retained its policy stance as neutral, indicating that interest rates are likely to remain stable in the near future. According to the governor, domestic economic indicators suggest that growth is on a firm footing despite uncertainties in the



global environment. He expressed confidence that the current momentum could be sustained over a longer period. While keeping rates unchanged, the RBI has marginally increased its inflation forecast for the current year and the next two quarters. Officials pointed out that price pressures in certain sectors required close monitoring, though overall inflation remained within manageable levels. In addition to the policy decision, the governor announced several consumer protection measures. A new framework will be introduced to compensate customers for losses of up to twenty five thousand rupees arising from small value digital transaction frauds. Draft guidelines are also being prepared to address issues related to mis selling by lenders, loan recovery practices and the conduct of recovery agents.

No-confidence motion against the Deputy Chairperson Ramchandra Kamat passed

■ Opposition threatens to move to court

Team Goemkarponn

MORMUGAO: A no-confidence motion filed against Mormugao vice chairperson Ramchandra

Kamat was passed by 13 votes at a meeting held in the



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Do not waste time because the internet is cheap, says PM Modi to students

■ Prime Minister urges responsible use of technology during Pariksha Pe Charcha interaction

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday advised students to use the internet and digital technology wisely, warning them against wasting time simply because online access has become inexpensive and easily available. Addressing youngsters at the ninth edition of Pariksha Pe Charcha, he stressed that technology should be used to build skills and knowledge rather than for harmful distractions. Speaking directly to students, the Prime Minister acknowledged that gaming can be a creative and strategic activity, but cautioned against platforms



that involve betting or gambling. He reminded the audience that Parliament has enacted the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act 2025 to prohibit online betting and gambling in the country. He said that young people

must remain alert to such dangers and avoid falling into unhealthy habits. The interaction, which connects the Prime Minister with students, teachers and parents ahead of examinations, witnessed record participation this

year with nearly 4.50 crore registrations. Modi encouraged exam warriors to focus on learning, time management and balanced use of social media. He observed that while digital tools offer immense opportunities, careless use can affect studies, mental health and family life. His remarks came amid growing global concern over the impact of excessive online gaming and social media exposure on children. Recent incidents involving minors and reports linking obsessive gaming behaviour to emotional distress have intensified the debate around digital

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CANACONA IS A WARNING GOA CANNOT IGNORE

The discovery of an extensive drug network in Canacona, uncovered through multiple raids within just ten days, should disturb anyone who still believes that the narcotics menace in Goa is confined to tourist-heavy coastal belts. What has come to light is not just a law-and-order episode but a deeper social warning. The drug trade has now made decisive inroads into rural Goa, and that reality demands urgent attention beyond routine police action.

Canacona has long been seen as one of South Goa's quieter regions, known for agriculture, small communities and relatively low crime. The recent seizures of cocaine, charas and synthetic drugs shatter that perception. When high-value narcotics are recovered repeatedly from the same taluka, it indicates not isolated consumption but organised distribution. Rural areas are no longer accidental pit stops. They are becoming part of the supply chain.

For years, Goa comforted itself with the belief that drugs were an external problem, brought in by tourists and driven by nightlife culture. That narrative was convenient because it allowed society to distance itself from the damage. But the growing involvement of locals, including young people from non-urban backgrounds, shows that the problem has turned inward. Drugs are no longer merely consumed here. They are sold, stored and trafficked from within Goan communities.

The consequences of this shift are severe. When narcotics reach villages and small towns, the social cost multiplies. Addiction in close-knit rural communities does not stay hidden for long. It affects families, drains limited household incomes, fuels petty crime and erodes trust. More dangerously, it normalises illegal income as an acceptable livelihood, particularly for unemployed youth with few opportunities.

What makes the Canacona

"What makes the Canacona case especially worrying is the scale and frequency of the seizures. Multiple raids in such a short span suggest that law enforcement may only be scratching the surface. For every operation that succeeds, it is reasonable to assume that others remain undetected. This raises uncomfortable questions about how long these networks have been operating and how deeply they are embedded."

The police deserve credit for intensified action and coordination. The raids signal improved intelligence gathering and a willingness to pursue cases beyond headline-friendly locations."

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The police deserve credit for intensified action and coordination. The raids signal improved intelligence gathering and a willingness to pursue cases beyond headline-friendly locations. However, enforcement alone cannot be mistaken for a solution. History shows that drug markets adapt quickly. Arrests disrupt supply temporarily but do not eliminate demand or the social conditions that allow trafficking to flourish.

There is also a risk of complacency once seizures are made public. Large hauls

create the illusion of control, while the everyday realities of addiction and recruitment continue unchecked. Goa's response to drugs has often been reactive, driven by crises rather than long-term planning. That approach has clearly failed to prevent the spread into rural areas.

What is missing is a comprehensive prevention strategy that treats drug abuse as a public health and social issue, not just a criminal one. Rural youth need access to education, employment and community spaces that offer alternatives to quick money and risky lifestyles. Schools must be equipped to talk openly about substance abuse without moralising or denial. Rehabilitation services must be accessible, affordable and free of stigma, especially outside urban centres.

Local governance also has a role it has not fully embraced. Panchayats and village leaders cannot afford silence or denial when drug activity enters their jurisdiction. Community vigilance, cooperation with law enforcement and early intervention can make a difference, but only if there is political will and administrative support.

Perhaps the most uncomfortable truth is that drugs thrive where society looks away. Turning a blind eye, rationalising the problem as someone else's responsibility, or dismissing it as inevitable has allowed the trade to spread quietly. Canacona's experience is not an exception. It is a signal of what could follow elsewhere if decisive, sustained action is not taken.

The recent raids should be treated as a warning, not a conclusion. Goa stands at a point where it must decide whether it wants to contain the drug menace or merely chase it from one location to another. Rural Goa, once considered insulated, has now been exposed. Ignoring that reality will come at a cost far greater than any seizure figure can capture.

LETTERS

Smart Meters, Smarter Burden on Citizens

Smart meters are being projected as a technological leap that will improve power monitoring and efficiency in Goa. While the idea may sound progressive on paper, the reality on the ground raises serious concerns about whether this rollout will actually benefit consumers or simply trouble them while placing an additional burden on the public exchequer. The first concern is cost. Even if authorities claim that installation will not be directly charged to consumers, the expense of procuring, installing and maintaining smart meters runs into crores. Eventually, this cost is likely to be recovered through higher tariffs or hidden charges. In effect, consumers may end up paying more for electricity in the name of efficiency. Secondly, the experience of smart meters elsewhere has not been reassuring. Many consumers report sudden spikes in bills, technical glitches and limited avenues for quick redressal. For ordinary households, especially senior citizens and those without digital access, understanding real-time consumption data or navigating online platforms can be confusing and stressful. The proposed shift towards prepaid or remotely controlled systems is another cause for worry. Electricity is an essential service, not a luxury. Any system that risks automatic disconnection due to payment delays disproportionately affects low-income families and those living on fixed incomes. Before pushing ahead with such a large-scale transition, the government must ask whether the problem truly lies with existing meters or with inefficiencies in billing, collection and infrastructure maintenance. Strengthening these areas may yield better results at far lower cost. Modernisation should ease citizens' lives, not complicate them. Smart meters should not become another experiment where the public pays the price for poorly thought-out policy decisions.

- Sahil Kalangutkar, Mapusa

Shocking Failure in Public Health Safeguarding

This week's revelation that a pharmaceutical company supplied dubious snake antivenom to the Goa government is deeply shocking and utterly unacceptable. Antivenom is not a cosmetic or convenience item. It is a life-saving medicine that rural communities and forest workers depend on in emergencies. To learn that substandard or questionable products were procured and presumably stocked in health facilities across the state shakes public confidence in the very systems meant to protect us. Goa's terrain and climate make snake bites a real and present danger. People living near fields, jungles and water bodies risk encountering venomous snakes. When that happens, they do not have the luxury of time. They need effective antivenom immediately. Any lapse in quality directly endangers human lives. Families already burdened by grief and trauma cannot also bear the consequences of bureaucratic or procurement failure. Equally troubling is the implication that regulatory mechanisms meant to screen, approve and monitor essential drugs are either weak, slow or both. It is not enough to act only after the fact, once someone has raised the alarm or worse, an adverse incident occurs. Those entrusted with public health procurement must ensure rigorous quality checks, transparency and accountability at every stage. This incident should prompt a deep and urgent review of how essential medicines are sourced and tested. There must be swift corrective action, but also systemic reforms so that our hospitals and clinics stock only reliable, effective drugs. Lives depend on it. Citizens of Goa deserve assurance that when they seek care, they will receive what they need - not what could harm them. A shock like this must lead to meaningful change, not complacency. Simona Peres

- Agassaim,

ANC Seizes Drugs Worth ₹65 Lakh In Early Morning Operation

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: Ecstasy, ganja and cocaine recovered from Mapusa resident; accused remanded to seven days police custody

In a significant breakthrough against drug trafficking, the Anti-Narcotics Cell (ANC) seized a large haul of narcotic substances during a targeted operation conducted in the wee hours of Thursday.

Acting on specific inputs and human intelligence, a team of ANC officers and staff intercepted the accused, Afnan Ghorri, a resident of Mapusa. During a personal search, the team



recovered ecstasy powder from his possession.

Following sustained interrogation, the accused led the ANC team to his residence, where a large quantity of drugs was seized. The recovered contraband included ecstasy, ganja and a sizeable quantity of cocaine weighing 127

grams. The total value of the seized narcotic substances has been estimated at ₹65 lakh.

The accused has been remanded to seven days of police custody. Investigations are currently underway to identify both forward and backward linkages in the drug supply chain

and to dismantle the wider network involved in narcotics trafficking.

The ANC has also initiated financial investigations to trace the money trail and examine transactions linked to the procurement and trafficking of the seized drugs. Reiterating its zero tolerance policy towards drugs, the ANC has urged the public to remain vigilant and report any suspicious drug-related activities. The raid was conducted by PSI Saheen Shetye under the close supervision of SP ANC Sunita Sawant and SP Nerlon Albuquerque. Further investigation is in progress.

CEO Seeks Reports After Amit Patkar Flags Irregularities in SIR Process in Goa

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Goa has sought detailed reports from the concerned authorities following a formal complaint submitted by Goa Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) president Amit Patkar, who raised serious objections over the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the State.

Patkar, in his complaint, alleged grave procedural lapses, lack of transparency and unconstitutional practices in the SIR process, stating that instead of strengthening democracy, the exercise was being conducted in a manner that raises doubts over its intent, fairness and legality.

According to the GPCC, the CEO's move to call for reports vindicates the concerns raised by the party and indicates that the issues flagged are serious and merit scrutiny.

In his complaint, Patkar pointed out that the SIR process is being carried out without adequate public awareness, leading to confusion and fear among voters. He further alleged that arbitrary deletions and objections are being entertained without following due process prescribed under the Representation of the People Act and Election Commission of India guidelines. The GPCC president also claimed that in several instances, Form 7 objections are



being accepted from individuals who are neither from the same electoral part nor directly affected, which, he said, opens the door to large-scale misuse. He alleged that the lack of transparency, accountability and proper verification could result in the disenfranchisement of genuine voters.

Patkar maintained that such practices violate constitutional guarantees under Articles 14, 19 and 326, which ensure equality, fairness and universal adult franchise. The Congress party has demanded an immediate review and correction of the ongoing SIR process, a halt to all unconstitutional and irregular practices, and the issuance of clear written guidelines to ensure transparency, due process and public participation. It has also insisted that no voter be deleted or objected to without strict adherence to law and proper hearing.

Warning that the party will remain vigilant, Patkar said the matter would be escalated to the Election Commission of India and other constitutional authorities if corrective steps are not taken promptly.

Birch Nightclub Fire Case: Mapusa Court Defers Bail Order for Luthra Brothers

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: Decision on applications to be delivered on February 10; defence rejects reports on asset auction for victim compensation

A Mapusa court on Thursday postponed its ruling on the bail pleas filed by Gaurav and Saurabh Luthra, the prime accused in the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub fire tragedy, and stated that the order will be pronounced on February 10.

During the hearing, lawyers representing the Luthra brothers informed



the court that the bail order was not yet ready for announcement, leading the court to reschedule the matter for next week.

The defence also addressed media reports claiming that the State government had

submitted a proposal before the High Court to compensate victims and their families by auctioning the accused's properties. The counsel firmly refuted these reports, stating that no such direction or scheme exists. "We have

carefully examined all court records and orders, and there is absolutely nothing indicating such a proposal. My clients have not been served with any order of this nature. We have placed the relevant documents before the court," the defence counsel submitted. The Luthra brothers were taken into custody on December 17, 2025, following the catastrophic fire at the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub on December 6, which resulted in the deaths of 25 people and left several others with injuries.

Goa Announces ₹95 Lakh Support Package to Revive Traditional Salt Pans

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: One-time grant under State scheme aims to protect heritage, boost livelihoods, and restore wetlands

The Goa government has approved a one-time financial assistance of ₹95 lakh for traditional salt pan cultivators under the Salt Pan Conservation, Support and Revival Scheme, which will come into force from the ongoing financial year.

As per a notification



issued by Director of Environment Sachin Dessai, a major portion of the allocation—₹75 lakh—has been earmarked for direct monetary support to salt farmers. Under this component, 75 traditional salt pan cultivators will receive ₹1 lakh each annually, helping them sustain and revive age-

GSPCB Shuts Down Two Anjuna Nightclubs Over Repeated Noise Violations

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: Hill Top and Salud ordered closed for two months; environmental penalties imposed under Environment Protection Act

Cracking down on persistent breaches of noise pollution regulations, the Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) has revoked the Consent to Operate issued to two well-known nightlife venues in Anjuna—Hill Top Bar and Restaurant



and Salud Kitchen and Lounge—and directed them to halt operations immediately for a period of two months.

Invoking powers under Section 5 of the Environment (Protection)

Act, 1986, the Board has also levied environmental compensation of ₹2 lakh on Salud and ₹1.40 lakh on Hill Top. The penalties were imposed for repeatedly recording noise levels beyond permissible

limits and for failing to ensure uninterrupted transmission of real-time data from their online noise monitoring systems.

According to official orders issued by the GSPCB, show-cause notices dated January 21, 2026, were served on both establishments after an examination of online noise monitoring data collected between October 1 and December 31, 2025. The analysis indicated frequent breaches of prescribed noise standards.

Porvorim Resident Cheated Of ₹4.66 Lakh In Online Banking Fraud

Team Goemkarponn

PORVORIM: A case of digital fraud has been registered following a complaint filed by a Porvorim resident who was allegedly cheated by an unknown person impersonating a bank official.

According to police, on February 4, 2026, at around 8.10 pm, an offence was registered on the basis of a complaint lodged by Mr. Ashok Bhembre, son of Damodar Bhembre, a resident of Samarth Bungalow,



Journalist Colony, Porvorim, Bardez, Goa.

The complainant stated that on January 31, 2026, at about 1.20 pm, at Porvorim, an unknown accused person contacted

him while impersonating as an official of the State Bank of India (SBI). The accused fraudulently gained control of the complainant's mobile phone and subsequently

carried out unauthorised online transactions from his HDFC Bank account using internet banking.

The fraudster allegedly transferred ₹95,000 in one transaction and ₹3,71,599 in another, thereby cheating the complainant of a total amount of ₹4,66,599 through digital means. Based on the complaint, police have registered an offence and initiated an investigation. The case is being investigated by PI Rahul Parab. Further investigation is in progress.

Driver Booked For Damaging Electric Pole On NH 66 At Pernem

Team Goemkarponn

PERNEM: A case has been registered at Pernem Police Station in connection with a motor vehicle accident that caused damage to public property on National Highway 66 at Dhargal.

Police said that on February 4, 2026, at around 7.07 pm, an offence was registered after conducting an enquiry into Pernem PS MV Accident No. 03/2026 dated January 27, 2026, and upon receipt of a



complaint from Shri Gautam Tari, Assistant Engineer, Sub Division III, Work Division VII (NH), Public Works Department, Colvale, Bardez.

As per the complaint, the incident occurred on January 25, 2026, at about 6.30 am near the Colvale bridge on NH 66 at Mahakhajan, Dhargal, Pernem.

Two Booked For Sexual Harassment Of Foreign Tourist At Calangute Beach

Team Goemkarponn

CALANGUTE: An offence has been registered at Calangute Police Station in connection with the sexual harassment of a foreign female tourist at Calangute Beach.

According to police, the case was registered on February 4, 2026, at around 11.04 pm, based on a written complaint filed by Shri Ladu Narayan Gad, IRB PC 313206, attached to the Tourist Police Unit, Calangute.

The complaint stated that prior to February 4, 2026, at a spot in

front of Ocean Shack at Calangute Beach, the accused persons — Akash Minaz, son of Ubhnad Minaz, aged 19

years, a resident of Calangute, Bardez, and Dhayan Tappo, son of Buti Tappo, aged 34 years, a resident of Calangute, Bardez,

originally from Odisha and visiting as an Indian tourist — allegedly forcefully clicked photographs with a foreign female tourist.

The accused also allegedly touched the woman inappropriately at a public place, thereby sexually harassing the foreign tourist.



Two Booked In Separate Gambling Cases In Bicholim

Team Goemkarponn

BICHOLIM: Bicholim Police registered two separate cases of illegal gambling and arrested two persons who were allegedly caught accepting money bets in public places.

In the first case, registered at around 2.26 pm on February 5, 2026, Head Constable Sakharam Raut (HC 5865) of Bicholim Police Station lodged a state complaint. Police said that at about 1.30 pm, opposite Shivaji Maidan near the Sulabh toilet in Bicholim, the



accused, Devidas Chari (37), a businessman and resident of Parvati Nagar, Kulan, Bicholim, was caught red-handed while accepting money bets from members of the public in an open public place. Police seized cash of ₹1,150 in different denominations along with other gambling articles

from his possession.

The accused was arrested on the same day and has been remanded to police custody. Further investigation is being carried out by HC Sakharam Raut.

In the second case, registered at around 2.37 pm, HC Rupesh Halarnkar (HC 5008) lodged a state

complaint stating that at about 1.40 pm in front of the Municipality Market, Bicholim, the accused, Anand Govekar (52), a businessman and resident of IDC, Bicholim, was caught red-handed while accepting money bets from the public in an open public place. Police seized cash amounting to ₹1,215 in different denominations and other gambling-related articles from his possession. The accused was arrested on February 5, 2026, and further investigation is in progress with HC Rupesh Halarnkar.

Two Arrested With Over 9 Kg Of Ganja At Curchorem

Team Goemkarponn

CURCHOREM: Curchorem Police have arrested two persons after seizing a large quantity of suspected ganja during an operation carried out at Curchorem.

Based on a state complaint lodged by PSI Gautam Shetkar of Curchorem Police Station, police said that on February 4, 2026, at around 4.25 pm, the accused were apprehended at the S.A.G. ground behind the Sateri temple at Curchorem.



The accused have been identified as Sangram Raut, a resident of Xeldem, Quepem, originally from Odisha, and Umesh Yadav, a resident of Tilamol, Quepem, originally from Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh. During the operation, police recovered one grey-coloured backpack and one sky-blue trolley

bag (suitcase) from their possession.

Upon inspection, the bags were found to contain 10 bundles of greenish leafy substance with flowering and fruiting tops, suspected to be ganja, weighing a total of 9.116 kg. The seized contraband is estimated to be worth approximately ₹9.11 lakh.

Both accused were arrested in connection with the case. Further investigation is being carried out by PSI Pramod Tari of Curchorem Police Station.

Three Booked For Illegal Laterite Stone Mining Near Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary

Team Goemkarponn

SANGUEM: Sanguem Police have registered a case against three persons for illegally extracting laterite stones in an eco-sensitive zone of Sanguem taluka.

Based on a complaint lodged by Sidharth Prabhu, Executive Magistrate and In-charge of the Flying Squad, Sanguem taluka, police said the action followed a report received from the In-charge Range Forest Officer, Range Forest Office, Sanguem.

According to the complaint, prior to January 8, 2026, at village



Naiquinim in Sanguem taluka, the accused — Anand Gaonkar, Francis D'Costa and Richard Fernandes — allegedly extracted laterite stones illegally from three pits without obtaining the mandatory permission from the Directorate of Mines and Geology.

Police further stated that the illegal quarrying activity was carried out at a location approximately 545 metres from the boundary of the Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary. As the area falls within the eco-sensitive zone, such activities are prohibited under existing regulations.

North Goa Collector Orders Safety Measures At Abandoned Quarries

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: In view of repeated incidents involving loss of life and serious injuries at abandoned and disused quarry sites, the North Goa District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) has issued a comprehensive administrative order directing mandatory safety measures at all such locations across the district. The order, issued by Collector and District Magistrate Ankit Yadav,



IAS, notes that unfenced and unsecured abandoned quarries pose a grave and continuing threat to human life, livestock and public

safety, particularly during the monsoon due to water accumulation, slippery terrain and reduced visibility. Unrestricted

public access to such sites has been classified as a preventable disaster risk under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

Under the directions, all owners, occupiers, lessees, firms and persons having ownership, possession or control over abandoned or non-operational quarries in North Goa have been instructed to erect durable barbed-wire fencing or equivalent physical barriers along the entire boundary to prevent unauthorised entry.

BJP Election-Ready for Margao Civic Battle; Council Wards to Increase to 27: Digambar Kamat

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: Public Works Department Minister Digambar Kamat on Thursday said the Bharatiya Janata Party is fully geared up for the forthcoming Margao Municipal Council elections, with its

organisational network and workers prepared across Goa.

Speaking to reporters, Kamat confirmed that the government's move to increase the strength of the Margao Municipal Council from 25 to 27 wards will stand. He maintained that the



addition of two wards would not have any significant effect on the

conduct of the elections.

Reacting to queries on the party's readiness, Kamat said he has no reservations about facing elections at any point. He asserted that both he personally and the BJP as a whole are prepared to go to the polls whenever they are scheduled.



Online OPD Registration Gains Momentum At GMC

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: The online OPD registration system at Goa Medical College (GMC) continues to see a strong response from the public, with 624 patients registering online on the second day of its rollout, indicating growing adoption of digital healthcare services across the State.

The initiative enables patients to book OPD appointments online for key departments including Medicine, Surgery,

Dermatology, ENT and Orthopaedics, helping reduce waiting times and making hospital visits more organised and predictable.

Health Minister Vishwajit Rane said the encouraging response reflects public trust in people-centric healthcare reforms aimed at simplifying access to medical services. He added that the system is designed to respect patients' time while improving efficiency within hospital operations.

Goa Links Tourism Incentives to Performance, Rolls Out Result-Based Scheme for Inbound Operators

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: Marking a decisive move away from blanket subsidies, the Goa government has introduced a new incentive framework that makes financial support for inbound tour operators strictly dependent on measurable outcomes.

The Department of Tourism has formally notified the "Inbound Tour Operators Incentive Scheme, 2026," aimed at reviving international tourist inflows that have remained sluggish even as domestic tourism has bounced back strongly after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under the new policy, incentives will be awarded only on the basis of actual operational performance, with eligibility tied to verified international passenger arrivals and aircraft load factors. The scheme is designed to



promote accountable, market-driven growth rather than offering assured financial assistance. In the notification, Director of Tourism Kedar Naik acknowledged that while domestic travel to Goa has recovered robustly, the return of overseas visitors has been uneven. The document highlights limited international charter flight operations—particularly from new and underrepresented source markets—as a major constraint to growth.

The scheme seeks to address this gap by

offering targeted incentives to inbound tour operators who can demonstrably increase charter operations in a sustainable manner. "Financial assistance will be linked solely to post-operational performance," the notification stated, underscoring the government's intent to reward results rather than promises. The incentive framework applies exclusively to international charter flights landing at Goa International Airport, Dabolim (GOI), and Manohar International Airport, Mopa (GOX).

Goa Forward Launches 'Amcho Avaz Vijai' Ahead Of Budget Session 2026

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: Ahead of the Budget Session of the Goa Legislative Assembly 2026, the Goa Forward Party (GFP) on Thursday launched a new public outreach initiative titled "Amcho Avaz Vijai", aimed at taking people's issues directly to the floor of the House.

The party said the campaign builds on three years of statewide outreach efforts led by GFP president Vijai Sardesai, during which the party engaged with citizens across Goa to highlight local and public concerns.

Under the initiative, issues raised by citizens will be collated and presented in the Assembly during the Budget Session. The campaign



will be implemented in two phases, starting with district-wise Janata Darbars, followed by collection of public issues through email submissions. The party has appealed to citizens to send their public issues, suggestions and concerns to goaforward.in before February 20, 2026, so

that their voices can be effectively raised in the Assembly. According to the party, "Amcho Avaz Vijai" is intended to strengthen public participation in the legislative process and ensure that people's everyday concerns find representation during discussions on the State's budget and policies.

Goa launches statewide programme to train faculty in artificial intelligence for modern teaching

■ Nearly 500 educators to receive structured guidance on using AI tools across 69 academic disciplines

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: The Directorate of Higher Education, Government of Goa, has introduced an extensive capacity building programme aimed at equipping college and university faculty with skills in artificial intelligence tools to enhance classroom teaching. The initiative focuses on helping educators integrate emerging technologies into academic practices in a systematic and discipline oriented manner.

Recognising that the use of artificial intelligence varies across fields of study, the directorate has designed a structured training model covering 69 disciplines grouped into six specialised clusters. The programme is being implemented in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Information Technology, Design and



Manufacturing, Jabalpur, which has facilitated the involvement of national and international experts as resource persons.

The Faculty Development Programme has been organised as a series of one week sessions dedicated to each cluster. The first phase began in November 2025 with the Applied Sciences group, which included subjects such as engineering, computer science, electronics, architecture, agriculture, education, design, fine arts, culinary studies and hospitality. This phase received strong participation from institutions

across the state and laid the foundation for the subsequent training modules. The remaining clusters, covering science, social sciences, commerce and management, law, humanities and languages, were taken up in the second phase that commenced on January 12, 2026 and concluded on February 5, 2026. The sessions focused on practical applications of artificial intelligence in curriculum design, assessment methods, research support and student engagement.

Through this initiative, the Directorate of Higher Education intends

to prepare around 500 faculty members from higher education institutions in Goa to adopt technology driven pedagogical practices. Officials believe that familiarity with artificial intelligence tools will help teachers redesign learning experiences, improve academic outcomes and remain aligned with global trends in higher education.

The programme forms part of a broader vision to modernise the state's academic ecosystem and to ensure that educators are equipped to guide students in an increasingly digital and knowledge based environment.

Artificial intelligence is here to stay and must be integrated responsibly into governance

■ Goa to host statewide AI Hackathon under Goa AI Mission 2027

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: The Department of Information Technology, Electronics and

Communications has announced the launch of a statewide Goa AI Hackathon aimed at accelerating the use of artificial intelligence in public service delivery. The initiative forms a major part of the Goa AI Mission 2027, which seeks to introduce technology driven solutions to improve efficiency, transparency and citizen focused governance.

Officials stated that the hackathon will encourage innovators, technologists and government departments to work together on practical AI applications that address real administrative challenges. The programme is expected to create tools that can simplify procedures such as verification of scheme applications, identification of incomplete documents and faster delivery of benefits to eligible citizens.

The director of the department emphasised that artificial intelligence



has become an essential element of modern governance and must be adopted in an ethical and responsible manner. He explained that the mission launched under the state leadership aims to harness the transformative potential of AI for the benefit of citizens. The hackathon will serve as a platform to design solutions that directly improve the quality and speed of public services. As part of the process, all government departments, corporations, autonomous bodies and local authorities have been invited to submit problem statements drawn from their routine operations. These statements are expected to highlight areas where AI interventions can bring measurable improvement. After detailed scrutiny, the department will support the development of customised AI tools suited to the specific needs of each agency.

...CONTD FROM PAGE 01

Goa Police Record Spike In NDPS Convictions, Foreign Nationals Jailed And Deported

United Kingdom, were deported after serving sentences or completing court-mandated procedures. Authorities highlighted that firm legal action against drug offenders, particularly foreign nationals, remains a priority to deter narcotics-related crimes in the State.

During 2025, Goa Police registered 163 NDPS cases and seized narcotic substances valued at approximately Rs 78.48 crore. A total of 212 accused were arrested, including 32 foreign nationals. In comparison, 162 NDPS cases were registered in 2024, with seizures worth Rs 9.91 crore and 192 arrests, including 24 foreign nationals.

Police officials attributed the higher conviction rate to sustained investigation

35 NDPS CASES ENDED IN CONVICTIONS IN GOA DURING 2025

- ▶ TOTAL OF 37 ACCUSED CONVICTED, INCLUDING FIVE FOREIGN NATIONALS
- ▶ SENTENCES RANGED FROM FEW MONTHS TO 10 YEARS, DEPENDING ON DRUG QUANTITY
- ▶ SURVEILLANCE AND INTELLIGENCE-LED OPERATIONS FURTHER STRENGTHENED
- ▶ ANC SEIZED DRUGS WORTH RS 65 LAKH FROM MAPUSA RESIDENT
- ▶ ECSTASY, GANJA AND COCAINE RECOVERED DURING HOUSE SEARCH
- ▶ FINANCIAL PROBE LAUNCHED TO TRACE MONEY TRAIL IN DRUG TRAFFICKING

efforts, close coordination with State prosecutors and constant monitoring of court proceedings. Of the 37 accused convicted during the year, 32 were Indian nationals and five were foreign nationals.

Courts awarded sentences ranging from a few months to a decade of rigorous imprisonment, depending

on the quantity and nature of drugs involved.

The Goa Police said surveillance measures have been tightened, intelligence-based operations strengthened and strict monitoring maintained on suspected individuals and networks involved in drug trafficking.

Meanwhile, the Anti-

Narcotics Cell (ANC) of Goa Police seized drugs worth around Rs 65 lakh from a resident of Mapusa during a raid carried out in the early hours of Thursday. The accused was identified as Afran Ghor, who was allegedly found in possession of ecstasy powder.

During a search of his residence, police recovered and seized a substantial quantity of narcotics, including ecstasy, ganja and cocaine. Officials said financial investigations have also been initiated to trace money trails linked to the procurement and distribution of the seized drugs.

The raid was conducted under the supervision of Superintendent of Police (ANC) Sunita Sawant and SP Nerlon Albuquerque, police sources said.

No-confidence motion against the Deputy Chairperson Ramchandra Kamat passed

municipal hall on Friday (6th Feb). Councillors supporting Ramchandra Kamat argued that the letter submitted to move the no-confidence motion was not in the name of a councillor and that the name mentioned was incorrect, therefore claiming that the motion was invalid and demanding that the meeting be cancelled. However, since the meeting on the no-confidence motion was held and the motion was passed, the councillors supporting Kamat said after the meeting that they would approach the court against this decision.

Do not waste time because the internet is cheap, says PM Modi to students

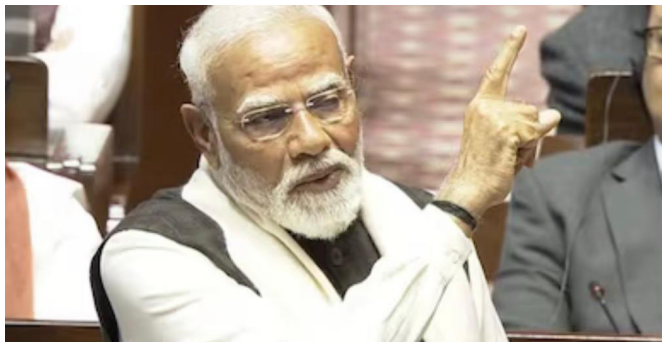
safety. Several countries have already introduced strict measures to protect young users. Nations such as Australia, France, Spain, Denmark and Greece have moved to restrict social media access for teenagers, with some banning accounts for users below 15 or 16 years of age. The United Kingdom is also considering similar steps to shield children from harmful content and excessive screen time. The Prime Minister urged parents and teachers to guide students in developing healthy online habits. He emphasised that technology should become a tool for progress and creativity, not a source of addiction. The message of the session focused on self discipline, responsible digital behaviour and the importance of human connections beyond screens.

Prefers the word black, PM Modi remarks spark clash with AAP in Parliament

■ Sanjay Singh calls statement personal attack as political tempers rise in Rajya Sabha

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday made a veiled reference to Aam Aadmi Party leader Sanjay Singh during his speech in the Rajya Sabha, triggering a sharp political exchange between the ruling side and the opposition benches. Without naming the MP directly, the Prime Minister said that some people seem to prefer the word black, a comment widely interpreted as aimed at Singh and past allegations linked to him.

During his address, Modi also criticised the AAP government in Delhi, stating that it had become synonymous with liquor



related controversies and had constructed what he described as a sheeshmahal that turned into a symbol of public anger. He added that such a party had no moral authority to lecture others on governance or ethics.

The Prime Minister remarked that everyone has a past and hinted at certain leaders having

questionable connections with the term black. Bharatiya Janata Party members viewed this as a clear reference to earlier accusations that Singh was involved in selling party tickets illegally, charges that the AAP leader has repeatedly rejected.

Sanjay Singh reacted strongly soon after the

speech, calling the remarks a personal and political attack born out of frustration. He alleged that the Prime Minister was unsettled because the opposition had raised questions regarding the Epstein files and demanded answers from the government.

The AAP MP further accused the Centre of bowing to foreign pressure and declared that his party would not allow national interests to be compromised. He said he was ready to face imprisonment again but would continue to oppose what he described as attempts to undermine the country.



NIA Alleges Non Cooperation By Bengal Police, Court Seeks Report From Murshidabad SP

■ Murshidabad authorities asked to ensure production of accused and transfer of case records

New Delhi: A court has sought a detailed response from the Superintendent of Police of Murshidabad after the National Investigation Agency alleged lack of cooperation from the West Bengal Police in a case related to Beldanga Police Station. The development has once again brought attention to coordination issues between central and state law enforcement agencies. In its submission before the court, the investigation agency stated that local police officials had not handed over important case records and seized articles despite earlier judicial directions. The matter pertains to a case registered at Beldanga Police Station in January 2026, which has now been formally taken over by the national agency. According to the application, the delay in transferring documents and materials was affecting the progress of the investigation.

The agency also informed the court that the

accused persons in the case were not produced on the scheduled date. A report from the Berhampore Central Correctional Home stated that 31 undertrial prisoners could not be brought to court because police escort was not available. The court recorded that the absence of escort arrangements by the local police had directly resulted in the non production of the accused.

Taking note of these issues, the court issued a series of directions to ensure compliance. The Superintendent of Police of Murshidabad has been asked to personally submit a report explaining the allegations of non cooperation. The Superintendent of the correctional home has been instructed to ensure that all accused persons are produced before the court on 12 February 2026 without fail.

The court further directed the district police chief to make adequate escort arrangements for the next hearing.

Amit Shah arrives in Jammu to review security and visit border posts

■ Home Minister to hold key meeting and launch welfare initiatives during three day tour

New Delhi: Union Home Minister Amit Shah reached Jammu on Thursday night for a three day visit focused on reviewing the security situation, assessing development projects and engaging with local stakeholders in the Union Territory. The tour comes at a time when anti terror operations continue in parts of Jammu and Kashmir.

Ahead of the visit, security arrangements were strengthened across the region. Police and Central Reserve Police Force personnel carried out area domination exercises, random vehicle checks and frisking operations, particularly around sensitive locations such as Lal Chowk and adjoining commercial areas. Additional deployment was

made to ensure smooth movement during the high level programme.

On Friday, the Home Minister is scheduled to visit forward border posts and interact with personnel stationed along the frontier. He is also expected to lay the foundation stones for six welfare schemes aimed at improving facilities for border security staff and their families. Later in



the day, he will chair a comprehensive security review meeting at Lok Bhavan in Jammu and meet families of martyrs.

Officials indicated that the meetings will involve senior officers from security agencies and the civil administration to evaluate the law and order scenario, counter insurgency measures and progress of infrastructure initiatives.

Three Naxals eliminated in Gadchiroli operation, nation intensifies fight against extremism

■ Elite commando loses life as security forces destroy Maoist camps in dense forest belt

New Delhi: Three Naxals were killed and an elite police commando lost his life during a prolonged encounter with security forces in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district on Friday. Another commando sustained injuries as the gun battle continued for more than twenty four hours in the heavily forested border region adjoining Chhattisgarh.

The operation was launched after Maharashtra Police received specific intelligence inputs about the movement of armed cadres belonging to

company number ten of the banned Communist Party of India Maoist. Acting on the information, the specialised C60 commando unit initiated a large scale counter insurgency action near Phodewada village along the Gadchiroli and Narayanpur border.

Officials stated that the first exchange of fire took place on Wednesday, during which two Maoist camps were destroyed. Security teams recovered several articles believed to belong to the insurgents, but difficult terrain and

thick vegetation allowed many of them to escape initially. To strengthen the cordon, four additional C60 units and a Quick Action Team of the Central Reserve Police Force were deployed on Thursday morning.

Fresh firing erupted again on Friday, leading to the recovery of the body of one Naxal along with an AK47 rifle and a self loading rifle. Authorities said the identities of the slain insurgents were yet to be confirmed and efforts were underway to determine whether

more Maoists had been injured or killed. Combing operations continued through the day to ensure that no armed cadres remained hidden in the area. The injured commando was being evacuated late in the evening while search teams expanded the operation across nearby stretches. Visuals from the site showed scattered belongings and makeshift shelters indicating the presence of a well established Maoist hideout. The encounter comes amid a nationwide



decline in Left Wing Extremism. Government data presented in Parliament earlier this week revealed that more than 7,400 Naxals have been arrested and 5,880 have surrendered since 2019.

Violence related to the movement has reduced sharply from 1,936 incidents in 2010 to 234 cases in 2025.

Authorities said only eight districts remain affected compared to 126 in 2018, with focused action being taken to choke financial and logistical networks of the banned organisation. In 2025 alone, security forces neutralised 364 extremists and facilitated over 2,300 surrenders, reflecting sustained pressure on the insurgent infrastructure.

Vaibhav Suryavanshi Smashes 55 Ball Century To Put India In Command

■ Young opener and captain Mhatre rebuild innings after early setback against England

New Delhi: India seized control of the ICC Under 19 World Cup final in Harare with a sensational batting display led by Vaibhav Suryavanshi, who blasted a breathtaking century off just 55 balls to put his team in a commanding position against England. The knock became the fastest hundred by an Indian in the history of the tournament and turned the momentum firmly in India's favour.

After winning the toss, captain Ayush Mhatre

chose to bat first on what appeared to be a good surface. India suffered an early blow when opener Aaron George was dismissed in the fourth over, raising hopes for the English camp. However, Suryavanshi and Mhatre responded with remarkable composure, stitching together a partnership of 142 runs for the second wicket that steadied the innings and set the platform for a big total.

Suryavanshi was the aggressor in the stand,

attacking the bowlers with fearless stroke play. He reached his half century in just 32 balls and continued to accelerate, finding the boundary with ease on both sides of the wicket. During his innings he also became the batter with the most sixes in a single edition of the Under 19 World Cup, underlining his dominance throughout the campaign.

Mhatre provided solid support at the other end, mixing caution with timely

boundaries before being dismissed for a well made 53 in the 19th over.



Record prize pool makes BPS Open Pickleball Championship a major milestone for Goa

■ Second edition in Margao to feature expanded categories and players from all age groups

Team Goemkarponn

Panjim: The BPS Sports Club in Margao is set to host the second edition of the BPS Open Pickleball Championship 2026 from February 6 to 8, marking another important step in the rapid growth of the sport across Goa. The three day event will bring together participants from different age groups and competitive levels, reflecting how quickly pickleball has moved from a recreational activity to an organised sporting discipline in the state.

Organisers have planned a packed schedule at the club

premises, with matches spread across multiple categories to ensure wide participation. The opening



day will see competitions in Men's Singles 60 plus, 35 plus Mixed Doubles, 50 plus Singles, Under 12 and Under 16 sections, giving both young players and senior competitors an opportunity to begin their campaign early in the tournament.

Racing at home makes it personal, says John Abraham as Goa Aces prepare for street battle

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: Actor and team owner John Abraham has described the upcoming Goa Street Race as an emotional milestone, stating that competing on home roads brings a sense of pride and responsibility unlike any other motorsport event. The streets of Goa will host the Indian Racing Festival on February 14 and 15, 2026, turning the



coastal state into a high energy racing destination.

Abraham, who owns Goa Aces JA Racing, said

that a street circuit carries a completely different atmosphere compared to permanent tracks. He explained that racing in front of local fans makes the contest more than just a fight for points or podium finishes. According to him, the familiarity of the surroundings and the presence of the community add an emotional dimension that every team member can feel.

Manish Kakode fifty powers CD Fountainhead to tense win over Rising Stars

■ Margao side chases target with three wickets in hand under floodlights

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: CD Fountainhead pulled off an exciting three wicket victory against Rising Stars of Ponda in a league encounter of the GSB Unity Cup 3.0 played at the MCC Ground in Margao on Wednesday night. The match witnessed dramatic swings before the hosts held their nerve to secure crucial points.



After winning the toss, Rising Stars of Ponda elected to bat first and managed to post 119 for nine in their 20 overs. Openers Venkat Biche and Sanat

Mhapne provided a steady start with a 37 run partnership inside four overs. Contributions from Nandan Acharya helped the innings move forward, while Paarth Kossambe remained unbeaten to ensure the team crossed the 120 run mark. For CD Fountainhead, Manish Kakode delivered an outstanding spell, claiming four wickets for just 16 runs.



Khandola and Margao colleges emerge champions in Goa University baseball tournament

■ Four day inter collegiate event witnesses participation from 24 teams across the state

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: Govt. College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Khandola and VVM's Shree Damodar College of Commerce and Economics, Margao claimed top honours in the Goa University Inter Collegiate Baseball Championship 2025-26, showcasing impressive performances in the men and women

categories respectively. The tournament was conducted from January 27 to February 2, 2026 at the Goa University ground in Taleigao.

The women's final turned out to be a closely fought contest in which Shree Damodar College, Margao edged past St. Xavier's College by a solitary run to lift the title. The match remained tense until the last moments,

with both sides displaying strong defensive and batting skills. In the men's final, the Khandola college team secured victory over GVM's Gopal Govind Poy Raiturcar College, Farmagudi, also by a margin of one run, underlining the competitive spirit of the championship.

Earlier, the semi final rounds produced equally exciting encounters. In the women's section, Shree

Damodar College defeated the Farmagudi college by one run to book a place in the final, while St. Xavier's College overcame DM's College, Assagao by the same narrow margin. The men's semi finals saw Khandola college register a convincing ten run win against Shree Damodar College, Margao, whereas the Farmagudi team defeated Shree Mallikarjun College by three runs to



reach the title clash.

A total of 14 men's teams and 10 women's teams from various institutions across Goa participated in the four day championship, reflecting the growing interest in baseball at the collegiate level. The event provided a platform for young

athletes to demonstrate their talent and gain competitive exposure.

The prize distribution ceremony was attended by representatives from Goa University, who presented medals and trophies to the winning teams and outstanding players.