



PONDA CONGRESS BLOCK OPPOSES BHATIKAR'S INDUCTION

Local cadre demand urgent meeting with AICC Goa in-charge, warn of damage to party credibility ahead of bypoll

Team Goemkarponn

PONDA: The Ponda Block Congress Committee has strongly objected to the proposed induction of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar into the Congress party, expressing "deep concern and discontent" over reports that he may be considered for the party ticket in the upcoming Ponda Assembly by-election.

In a letter dated February 19, 2026, addressed to AICC Goa in-charge Manikrao



Thakare and routed through GPCC President Amit Patkar, block office-bearers and grassroots workers alleged that the move bypasses the democratic process and disregards the sentiments

of local party workers.

The committee also questioned the consultation process, stating that Dr. Bhatikar had publicly announced on social media that he would join the Congress on February 24 at 3:30 pm — even before any formal discussion with the Ponda Block Committee. This, they said, has "aggravated the frustration and anger" among workers who feel disrespected.

The block unit has demanded that the promised meeting with

party leadership be convened within two days in the presence of the AICC Goa in-charge to allow workers to present their objections directly. Citing reasons for opposing the induction, the committee highlighted the contribution of Congress leader Rajesh Verenkar, who secured 6,700 votes in the 2022 Assembly elections and lost by a margin of 690 votes in a three-cornered contest. They also noted that the party improved

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Verekar Says Bhatikar's Entry Not Injustice, Calls For Ideological Clarity

Ponda Congress leader says bypoll ticket talk premature, stresses party strengthening

Team Goemkarponn

PONDA: Senior Congress leader Rajesh Verekar on Thursday said the proposed induction of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar into the Congress party should not be viewed as a personal slight, even as he underlined the need to understand Bhatikar's ideological position following his entry. "We have been friends since childhood, but as politicians we are not friends because our ideologies are different. He belonged to the MGP and I belong



to the Congress, so our ideologies never matched," Verekar said. Clarifying that personal relations and political affiliations must be viewed separately, he added, "At a personal level, we are friends; our personal relationship is different, and so are our party affiliations."

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Villagers, RGP MLA Viresh Borkar Demand Rollback of Section 39A Land Use Changes in Palem-Siridao

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: Villagers from Palem-Siridao, along with Viresh Borkar, met Chief

Town Planner Ms. Vertika Dagur at the Town and Country Planning (TCP) office

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High Stakes Battle For CCP: BJP-Backed Babush Panel Files Nominations For All 30 Wards

Uday Madkaikar exudes 100% confidence of sweeping victory as candidates offer prayers at Shri Mahalaxmi Temple

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: The stage is set for a high-voltage contest in the upcoming City Corporation of Panaji (CCP) Elections 2026, with the BJP-backed panel led by Babush Monserrate filing nominations for all 30 wards on Friday and expressing confidence of a decisive victory. Former Mayor Rohit Monserrate



filed his nomination from Ward No. 4 for the next five-year term,

while Kareena Shirodkar submitted her papers from Ward No. 8. The Babush-

backed candidates also offered prayers at the Shri Mahalaxmi Temple before filing their nominations. Meanwhile, Surendra Furtado of the Ami Panjekar panel backed by Utpal Parrikar has filed his nomination from Ward No. 9. "I have filed my nomination for the upcoming CCP elections from Ward 9, but I can

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2.74 Lakh Women Reported Missing In Six Years In Madhya Pradesh

Assembly Data Reveals Nearly 130 Disappearances Every Day Since 2020

New Delhi: Official figures presented in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly have revealed that an average of nearly 130 women and girls have gone missing every day in the state over the past six years. The data was shared in response to a query raised by Congress MLA Vikrant Bhuria. In a written reply, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav confirmed that between 2020 and January 28, 2026, a total



of 2,74,311 women and girls were reported missing across Madhya Pradesh. The figures translate to roughly 45,000 cases annually and about 3,700

each month during this period. According to the government, 2,35,977 individuals have been traced so far. However, 68,334 women and girls remain unaccounted for, leaving thousands of families awaiting answers. The yearly data shows little sign of a sustained decline. More than 30,000 cases were recorded in 2020, rising to over 39,000 in 2021.

Preliminary Report On Baramati Learjet Crash To Be Made Public Within 30 Days

Investigation Underway As Flight Recorders Examined And Special Audits Ordered

New Delhi: The Ministry of Civil Aviation has announced that a preliminary report into the Learjet 45 crash at Baramati, which claimed the life of senior NCP leader Ajit Pawar and four others, will be released within 30 days of the accident. The inquiry is being conducted by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau under the Aircraft



Investigation of Accidents and Incidents Rules, 2025, in line with global standards outlined in ICAO Annex 13. According to the ministry, the investigation is



focused on a technical and evidence based assessment of the crash. This includes a detailed inspection of the wreckage, scrutiny

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When Exams Lose Credibility

The decision by the Goa Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education to initiate an inquiry into alleged malpractice at a Mapusa Higher Secondary School examination centre is deeply troubling. Public examinations are meant to be the ultimate test of merit and fairness. When those entrusted with conducting them are themselves accused of wrongdoing, the consequences go far beyond one school or one paper. They strike at the very credibility of the education system.

According to reports, a Deputy Conductor and a Supervisor were removed from exam duty after allegations surfaced that they assisted students during a mathematics examination. The complaint, reportedly filed by a student and her parents, claimed that the Deputy Conductor helped his own students with answers inside the examination hall. Both officials have now been barred from further duties pending an inquiry, and the Board's Malpractice Committee is expected to investigate the matter.

If proven true, the allegations represent a serious breach of trust. Teachers and exam officials occupy positions of authority and responsibility. They are expected to ensure discipline and fairness, not compromise them. When those assigned to uphold the integrity of examinations become participants in malpractice, it undermines the entire evaluation process.

The immediate victims of such misconduct are honest students. Thousands of students spend months preparing for board examinations, often under intense pressure. For many, these exams determine college admissions and future opportunities. When some students are given unfair assistance, it devalues the efforts of those who rely solely on hard work. It sends a dangerous message that rules can be bent and that integrity is optional. The Board deserves credit for acting quickly by removing the officials from duty and initiating an inquiry. Swift action is necessary in

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such cases to maintain public confidence. However, a routine departmental inquiry may not be enough. Allegations involving exam malpractice require a thorough and transparent investigation. The stakes are too high for half measures or quiet closures.

This is why the matter calls for a high-level probe. The investigation must establish not only whether malpractice occurred, but also how it was allowed to happen. Were there lapses in supervision? Were standard protocols ignored? Was this an isolated incident or part of a larger pattern? These questions must be answered clearly and publicly.

Exam malpractice rarely happens in isolation. It often reflects systemic weaknesses such as inadequate monitoring, lack of accountability, or a culture of tolerance towards minor violations that gradually escalate into serious misconduct. If loopholes exist

in the examination system, they must be identified and closed immediately.

Technology can play a role in preventing such incidents. Many examination boards across the country have introduced CCTV surveillance, flying squads, and digital monitoring systems to reduce malpractice. Goa must ensure that similar safeguards are consistently implemented and enforced across all examination centres.

Equally important is accountability. If the allegations are proven, strict disciplinary action must follow. Anything less would send the wrong signal. Officials found guilty of malpractice should face meaningful consequences, including disqualification from future exam duties and possible suspension from service. Only firm action can deter similar misconduct in the future.

At the same time, the role of students cannot be ignored. While the primary responsibility lies with exam officials, students must also understand that accepting unfair assistance is wrong. Education is not just about marks. It is also about values. Schools must reinforce the importance of honesty and integrity alongside academic achievement. Transparency will be key in restoring public trust. The findings of the inquiry should be made public, and the Board must clearly outline the steps taken to prevent recurrence. Silence or secrecy will only fuel suspicion and speculation. Examinations are a cornerstone of the education system. Their credibility must be protected at all costs. Even a single incident of malpractice can damage confidence and raise doubts about the fairness of results.

The Mapusa case should serve as a wake-up call. It is an opportunity for authorities to strengthen systems, enforce accountability, and reaffirm their commitment to fairness.

Students deserve a level playing field. Parents deserve confidence in the system. And society deserves an education system built on integrity, not shortcuts. Anything less would be a disservice to the future.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

If You Oppose Valentine's Day, Will You Reject Western Innovations Too?

By Sandeep Heble

Every year around Valentine's Day, some group or another suddenly surfaces to stage protests or deliver moral lectures. Often these actions appear less about preserving culture and more about attracting attention and headlines. If the objection is genuinely rooted in opposition to so-called "Western traditions," then a simple and logical question arises. Why stop at flowers and greeting cards? Why not reject everything Western in its entirety? From the electricity that powers our homes to the telephone that revolutionised communication, modern India relies heavily on global discoveries and technological progress. Modern medicine, advanced surgical procedures, aviation, artificial intelligence, and digital communication platforms all owe much of their development to Western innovation. Our daily lives revolve around smartphones, the internet, railways, aircraft, and banking systems that evolved through global scientific contributions. It is worth asking whether those who object to Valentine's Day would be willing to abandon these conveniences as well. Selectively enjoying the benefits of global progress while theatrically opposing harmless cultural observances reflects a clear contradiction. India's colonial past under British rule was undeniably harsh and exploitative. Colonialism left deep scars and economic damage that cannot be ignored. Yet history unfolded during a time when conquest and territorial expansion were common across continents. Kingdoms and empires rose and fell through warfare and annexation. Indian rulers too engaged in territorial expansion, as did powers across Asia, Europe, and beyond. While colonial rule must be remembered and studied honestly, it cannot become a perpetual excuse to reject everything associated with the West in the present day. Speculating about how the Indian subcontinent might have evolved without British rule is an interesting but ultimately academic exercise. It is possible the region might have developed into several independent states, much like Europe. Alternatively, another form of political consolidation might have taken place. No one can say with certainty. What matters is the reality of modern India. Today, India stands as a sovereign republic with a parliamentary democracy and constitutional rights. Many of our political and institutional frameworks draw inspiration from democratic ideas that evolved across the world. The English language, widely used in education, governance, and business, has become a bridge connecting India to global commerce, science, and diplomacy. These influences have been adapted into an Indian context and are now part of the nation's functioning fabric. There is also an evident double standard in how cultural exchange is viewed. When Diwali is celebrated in foreign cities, when Navratri events fill community halls abroad, or when yoga gains global recognition, Indians take pride in the worldwide embrace of their traditions. Yet some of the same voices object loudly to the presence of Western cultural observances within India. Cultural exchange is not a one-way street. It has always been a natural outcome of human interaction and globalisation. More importantly, India faces challenges that demand serious attention. Crumbling infrastructure, poorly planned urban growth, environmental degradation, air pollution, corruption, and widening economic inequality affect millions of lives every day. These are issues that deserve public mobilisation and civic engagement. Energy spent on symbolic cultural protests could be better directed toward holding authorities accountable and improving living conditions for ordinary citizens. In a democracy, individuals have the freedom to celebrate what they value and ignore what they do not. Moral policing over personal choices distracts from meaningful nation-building. A confident society does not feel threatened by greeting cards or roses. Instead, it focuses on progress, inclusivity, and the real challenges that shape the nation's future. India's strength has always been its ability to absorb influences while preserving its identity. That maturity must guide us today.

Supreme Court Defers Hearing On Goa Tiger Reserve Issue Till March 19

■ Goa Foundation Granted Two Weeks To File Affidavit; State Questions CEC's Recommendation Covering 468.60 Sq Km

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: The Supreme Court has postponed the hearing in the matter concerning the proposed Tiger Reserve in Goa to March 19, allowing the petitioner, Goa Foundation, two weeks to submit its affidavit. The extension was sought by Goa Foundation to respond to the State government's affidavit opposing the recommendation of the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) to notify a Tiger Reserve in Goa. The CEC had suggested declaring 468.60 square kilometres of protected forest land as a Tiger Reserve in the first phase.

The areas proposed for inclusion in the reserve comprise the Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary, Cotigao



Wildlife Sanctuary, and portions of the Bhagwan Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park. Senior officials at the State Secretariat confirmed that the government intends to strongly challenge the CEC's findings. In its affidavit before the apex court, the State has argued that the committee's recommendation is founded on a flawed interpretation of law, lacks adequate scientific data, and overlooks Goa's

authority to determine conservation strategies suited to its specific ecological and social landscape. The government has further contended that mandating the declaration of a Tiger Reserve in the State would be unnecessary and may lead to adverse consequences.

It warned of possible resentment among local communities due to displacement concerns and an escalation in human-wildlife conflict. In its submission, the

State maintained that the CEC report should not be relied upon by the court, asserting that it fails to provide sound scientific, legal, or ecological reasoning.

The affidavit describes the report as vague and indicative of insufficient consideration of the complexities involved.

Additionally, the State has alleged that the CEC exceeded the mandate granted by the Supreme Court in its September 8, 2025 order. According to the government, the committee was tasked with a limited and objective review but went beyond its jurisdiction by effectively recommending notification of a Tiger Reserve — a step the State claims was outside the committee's authority.



NGT Continues Suspension Of Sand Mining In Goa Till April 23

■ GCZMA Tells Tribunal Extraction Is Prohibited In CRZ Areas; Penalty On Authority Withdrawn

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has extended the temporary halt on sand mining operations in Goa until April 23, after being informed that such activity is not permitted within Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) areas.

In an order dated February 16, the Western Bench of the NGT directed that the interim

stay on sand extraction would remain in force until the matter is taken up again on April 23.

The tribunal took note of an affidavit submitted by the Goa Coastal Zone Management Authority (GCZMA), which clarified that the Directorate of Mines and Geology (DMG) had proposed sand mining at sites falling within CRZ limits, where the activity is barred under existing regulations.

Row Deepens Over SP Sagar Ekoskar's Chief Minister's Gold Medal

■ Home Department Seeks Police Review Following Complaint By Farmers' Leader.

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: The dispute surrounding recently promoted Superintendent of Police Sagar Ekoskar has escalated, with the State Home Department directing the police hierarchy to examine a complaint calling for reconsideration of the Chief Minister's Gold Medal conferred on him on December 19, 2025.

In a communication addressed to the Director General of Police (DGP), the department forwarded a representation submitted by Hanumant Parab, president of the Pissurlem Farmers Association, and asked that appropriate action be taken.

The letter, referring to Parab's February 17, 2026 representation to the Chief Secretary, seeks a review and withdrawal of the medal awarded to



Ekoskar. The subject line specifically mentions a "request for review and cancellation" of the honour granted to the then Deputy Superintendent of Police.

In his complaint, Parab has levelled a series of allegations against the officer and questioned the decision to recognise him with the State's prestigious award. He alleged that on March 11, 2022, during a protest at the Pissurlem Police Station against mining silt reportedly affecting agricultural lands, Ekoskar assaulted him and several farmers.

Government Waives Rs 1.98 Crore Stamp Duty On SEZ Land Surrender At Keri

■ Meditab Returns 12.32 Lakh Sq Mtrs To GIDC; Land Valued At Rs 33 Crore To Be Repurposed.

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: The State government has granted a waiver of nearly Rs 1.98 crore in stamp duty on a deed of surrender executed between Meditab Specialities Limited and the Goa Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC) for the return of over 12.32 lakh square metres of land at Keri in Ponda. The total valuation of the surrendered land stands at Rs 33 crore. According to an order

issued on February 13, Under Secretary (Revenue) Agnelo D'Souza confirmed that the government approved exemption of stamp duty amounting to Rs 1,98,00,000 in connection with the surrender of the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) land located in Keri village. The State Cabinet had, in January last year, resolved to reclaim the land originally allotted to Meditab during 2006-07

for establishing an SEZ. The government has since decided that the land will be put to alternative use.

The Goa SEZ Policy introduced in 2006 aimed to accelerate industrial growth and attract investment by facilitating the creation of Special Economic Zones across the State. Under this framework, land parcels were allotted to seven developers, including Meditab, which received more than

12 lakh square metres at Keri through GIDC. However, the policy faced widespread public resistance, prompting the government to publish a white paper in December 2007 that questioned the limited economic returns from the proposed SEZs. Subsequently, the State scrapped the SEZ policy in 2008. GIDC then issued show-cause notices to all seven developers and formally revoked their land allotments on June 24, 2008.

Cement Truck Rams Into Temple Compound in Kindlem

Team Goemkarponn

Canacona: A loaded truck carrying cement bags rammed into the compound wall of the Shree Nirakar Devasthan at Kindlem in Canacona on Thursday. According to sources, the driver of the cement-laden truck reportedly lost control of the heavy vehicle, which



veered off the road and crashed into the temple

compound, shattering a portion of the wall.

An electricity pole with overhead cables located within the premises was also damaged in the mishap. Fortunately, no one was present inside the temple premises at the time of the accident. The driver escaped unhurt, though the front portion of the truck, including the bonnet, was badly damaged.

Faridabad Man Arrested In ₹1.64 Crore Cyber Investment Fraud Case

■ Goa Cyber Crime Police trace accused after multi-state probe; ₹28 lakh routed through Axis Bank account linked to ₹2.40 crore fraud network

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: The Cyber Crime Police Station, Goa, has arrested a 31-year-old man from Haryana in connection with a massive online investment fraud amounting to ₹1.64 crore.

The offence was registered on January 19, 2026, at the Cyber Crime Police Station



under Crime No. 03/26 under Sections 318 (4), 319 (2) read with relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)

and Section 66-D of the Information Technology Act, based on a complaint lodged by a resident of Corlim, Tiswadi-Goa.

As per police investigation, between October 18, 2025 and January 16, 2026, the accused and his associates contacted the complainant through social media and added

him to a WhatsApp group. The fraudsters allegedly posed as partners of "Dalton Investment Inc" and claimed association with Retailer Associations Mumbai. The complainant was induced to invest in upper circuit (UC) and initial public offering (IPO) stocks of SeAH and PLAI companies on the promise of high returns.

Cannabis Cultivation Racket Busted In Porvorim; Three Held Under NDPS Act

■ Five cannabis plants, ganja and hydroponic weed worth ₹1.28 lakh seized; supplier arrested in swift follow-up action

Team Goemkarponn

Porvorim: The Anti Narcotic Police Station, St. Cruz-Goa, has busted an illegal cannabis cultivation and drug supply operation at Alto Porvorim and arrested three persons in connection with the case. Crime No. 06/2026 has been registered under Sections 20(a), 20(b)(ii) (A) read with 29 of the NDPS Act, 1985, dated February 18, 2026. Acting on a House Search Warrant, a narcotic raid was conducted on the intervening night of February 17 and 18 at a rented flat in Rivera Residency, Alto Porvorim, Bardez-Goa. During the search, police found five cannabis plants allegedly being grown illegally



inside the premises. Officers also recovered 16 grams of suspected ganja and 22 grams of suspected hydroponic weed (ganja), with the total value of the seized contraband estimated at ₹1,28,600. The two occupants of the flat, identified as Vedant Deshpande of Shri Krishna Nagar, Hudco Nagar, Sambhajinagar, Maharashtra, and Mayur Murlidhar Kolhe of Kalmeshwar near Hanuman Mandir, Nagpur, Maharashtra, were arrested at the scene.

Woman Booked For Carrying Live Ammunition At Mopa Airport

■ Two live rounds detected during security screening; passenger fails to produce valid licence or BCAS permission

Team Goemkarponn

Mopa: Pernem Police have registered an offence against a 39-year-old woman passenger after two live ammunition rounds were detected in

her baggage at Manohar International Airport, Mopa. The case was registered on February 18, 2026 at 17.10 hrs based on a complaint lodged by Mr. Lohith P.N., Duty Manager of ILHBSS at Manohar

International Airport, Mopa, Pernem-Goa. As per the complaint, at around 17.39 hrs on the same day, during pre-boarding security screening, airport security personnel detected two live rounds inside the



baggage bearing tag No. 0312770358 belonging to the passenger, identified as Bindu Kumari, wife of Binay Kumar, resident of Upper Sukkar, Sukar Khas (399), Kangara, Himachal Pradesh.

₹7.35 Lakh Theft At Baga Restaurant; Mumbai Man Booked

Team Goemkarponn

Calangute: Police have registered an offence in connection with a theft of ₹7.35 lakh reported from a restaurant in Baga. The case was registered on February 19, 2026 at 12.57 hrs based on a written complaint filed by Keshu Nathabhai Agath, a resident of Shivalik Avenue, Bodakdev, Ahmedabad, Gujarat. According to the complaint, the incident occurred on January 18, 2026 at around 12.30 hrs

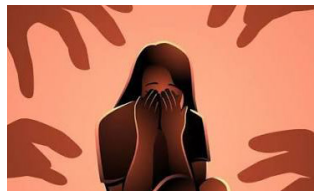
at Krishna Kathiyavadi Kitchen, Baga. The complainant stated that while he had briefly gone to wash his hands, the accused allegedly took advantage of his absence and decamped with his bag containing cash amounting to ₹7,35,000. Police have identified the accused as Pralhad Chandrakant Parab, a resident of Sundar Nagari, Lala Nigam Road, Colaba Market, Colaba, Mumbai, Maharashtra. After allegedly stealing the cash, the accused fled from

Man Arrested For Alleged Rape And Assault In Cansaulim

■ Woman from Karnataka accuses acquaintance of sexual assault, physical abuse and criminal intimidation

Team Goemkarponn

Verna: Verna Police have arrested a man from Cansaulim following a complaint of rape and assault lodged by a woman from Uttar Kannada district, Karnataka. The case was registered based on the complaint of the survivor, whose identity has been withheld for legal reasons. According to the complaint, on



February 15, 2026, in the morning hours at a guest house room in Cansaulim, the accused, identified as Irfan Khan, allegedly forced himself on the complainant without her consent. The survivor further alleged that on February 17,

2026 at around 3:00 hrs, the accused took her on his scooter to an isolated location at IDC Verna, where he allegedly assaulted her with a belt and again subjected her to sexual assault against her will. The accused also allegedly threatened her with dire consequences. Following the complaint, police registered an offence and arrested the accused in connection with the crime.

Man Caught Accepting Gambling Bets In Porvorim



Team Goemkarponn

Porvorim: Porvorim Police have registered an offence against a 39-year-old man for allegedly accepting gambling bets in a public place near the Sports and Cultural Club, Porvorim. The case was registered on February 18, 2026 at 21:21 hrs based on a state complaint filed by Assistant Sub Inspector Prashant Naik of Porvorim Police Station. As per the complaint, between 19:40 hrs and 20:45 hrs on the same day, the accused, identified as Sitaram Sawant, resident of Satingan Wada, Khorlim, Mapusa, Bardez-Goa, was caught red-handed while allegedly accepting gambling bets from members of the public in an open public place.

Daily Wage Worker Killed After Wall Collapse In Cuncolim

■ 29-year-old labourer from Bihar declared brought dead at PHC Balli; UD case registered

Team Goemkarponn

Cuncolim: A 29-year-old daily wage labourer lost his life after a wall collapsed on him while he was at work in Nagelo, Cuncolim, on Tuesday. Cuncolim Police have registered a case of unnatural death

and initiated further inquiry into the incident. According to police, on February 18, 2026 at around 12:09 hrs, a phone call was received from a doctor at PHC Balli informing that Mohammad Sabir, 29, resident of Ghotna, Cuncolim, originally from Parshadpur,

Araira, Bihar, had been brought dead to the health centre from Nagelo, Cuncolim. Preliminary enquiry revealed that the deceased was engaged in daily wage labour work at the house of Closuton Almeida, a resident of Nagelo, Cuncolim. While

working at the site, a wall reportedly collapsed and Sabir got trapped under the debris. He was immediately shifted to PHC Balli for treatment, where doctors declared him brought dead. Police visited the scene and conducted a panchanama of the

unnatural death occurrence and an inquest over the body. The body has been preserved at South Goa District Hospital, Margao, for further medico-legal formalities. Further enquiry is being conducted by PSI Aditya Sawant of Cuncolim Police Station.

Amonkar inaugurates grand Shivaji statue at Sada amid fireworks

Team Goemkarponn

SADA: In a dramatic turn of events, Mormugao MLA Sankalp Amonkar on Thursday evening presided over the grand inauguration of a towering statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at Sada Junction, even as the Mormugao Port Authority (MPA) has moved the High Court of Bombay at Goa challenging development on the land. Amid a blaze of fireworks that lit up the skyline, chants of "Har Har Mahadev", "Jai Shivaji"



and "Jai Bhavani" echoed through the air as hundreds of Shiv Premis gathered in a

sea of white kurtas and saffron turbans. The atmosphere was electric, with traditional Shivaji aarti performed before the statue, conch shells blown, and drums beating in celebration of what supporters described as a historic milestone for the constituency. Calling it a "historic unveiling" of the grand statue in the Mormugao constituency for the very first time, Amonkar said the moment marked the culmination of years of aspiration and effort by devoted followers. "This is

a proud and long-awaited milestone for all of us. I thank all Shiv Premis and fellow citizens who have joined us in celebrating this glorious occasion and becoming part of a memorable chapter in our constituency's history as we honour the legacy and values of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj," Amonkar said. The ceremony was conducted at the hands of the MLA in the presence of councillor Shraddha Amonkar and other dignitaries, with a massive crowd turning up to witness the unveiling.

MPA moves High Court over 'illegal' statue on port land

SADA: The Mormugao Port Authority (MPA) has approached the High Court of Bombay at Goa challenging what it terms as the illegal erection of a statue on public property belonging to the port authority. In a communication dated 18 February 2026 addressed to the district administration, police and municipal authorities, the MPA informed that it has filed a writ petition before the High Court in connection with the statue installed on its land. Copies of the petition along with relevant exhibits have been

enclosed with the letter. The communication has been marked to the Collector of South Goa, the Deputy Collector of Mormugao Taluka, the Police Inspector of Bogda Police Station and the Chief Officer of Mormugao Municipal Council, seeking immediate attention to the matter. The port authority has stated that since 19 February 2026 is a holiday for the High Court and the Division Bench does not sit on 20 February 2026, the writ petition will be mentioned for urgent circulation before the Division Bench on 23 February 2026.



CM Pramod Sawant Inaugurates Goa Spiritual Festival In Sanguem

■ Unveils Tallest Smarak Of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Reaffirms Commitment To Heritage And Spiritual Tourism

Team Goemkarponn

Sanguem, Goa: Chief Minister Pramod Sawant inaugurated the Goa Spiritual Festival and unveiled the tallest Smarak of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in Goa on the occasion of Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti.

The ceremony was held in the presence of Pujya

Brahmeshanand Acharya Swamiji, Ministers Subhash Phal Dessai and Digambar Kamat, revered saints, public representatives and Shivpremi citizens

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Sawant said, "This magnificent Smarak of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is a proud symbol of our history and self-respect.

Goa CM Attends AI Impact Summit 2026 In New Delhi

■ Explores AI Innovations To Boost Governance, Education, Healthcare And Law Enforcement In Goa

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji/New Delhi: Chief Minister Pramod Sawant visited the AI Impact Summit India 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, where he witnessed cutting-edge advancements in artificial intelligence and interacted with leading global technology companies.



Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Sawant said, "AI will play a transformative role in governance, education, healthcare

and law enforcement. Goa will actively support innovators and startups to build a future-ready, Swayampurna State."

The Chief Minister reviewed AI-driven solutions designed to strengthen public service delivery, improve educational outcomes, modernise healthcare systems, enhance agricultural productivity, and support law enforcement agencies with faster and more accurate investigations.

DLC Reviews 116 Forest Rights Claims In Kushavati District

Team Goemkarponn

Dharbandora: The District Level Committee (DLC) meeting of Kushavati District was chaired by Ms. Egna Cleetus, IAS, Collector, to deliberate on claims submitted by the Sub-Divisional Level Committee (SDLC), Dharbandora Taluka, under the Forest Rights Act, 2006. A total of 116 claims pertaining to Sangod,



Aglot, Shigao and Surla villages of

Dharbandora Taluka were taken up for consideration during the meeting. The Committee reviewed the applications in accordance with the provisions of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, ensuring due scrutiny and verification as per the prescribed guidelines. Further action on the claims will be taken as per the recommendations and decisions of the Committee.

NGDMFT Approves ₹5.5 Crore New Proposals In 16th Governing Council Meeting

■ ₹22 Crore Projects Reviewed For Skill Development, Education, Healthcare And Mining-Belt Welfare

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: Collector (North Goa) and Chairman of the North Goa District Mineral Foundation Trust (NGDMFT), Ankit Yadav, chaired the 16th Governing Council Meeting of the Trust in the presence of Union Minister of State for Power



Shripad Yesso Naik, MLA Premendra Shet and MLA Dr Chandrakant Shetye, along with other Trustees.

During the meeting, the committee reviewed key proposals sanctioned by the NGDMFT worth over ₹22 crore. These projects focus on skill development, education, healthcare, rural development, animal husbandry and other welfare initiatives in mining-affected areas of North Goa.

BBA Students Gain Hands-On Training In Dining Etiquette At EnviroSkills Academy

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: Students of FY BBA (Travel & Tourism) undertook an academic field trip to EnviroSkills Academy on February 13, 2026, to gain practical exposure to dining etiquette and the hospitality and skill development industry. The visit began at 10:15 a.m. with an introductory session by Principal Chef



Moses Fernandes, who presented an overview of the academy's vision, infrastructure and academic programmes. He highlighted the key qualities essential in the

hospitality sector, including empathy, understanding customer needs and adaptability, stressing their importance in delivering exceptional service in a dynamic industry.

Congress to Appoint District Presidents on Merit, Loyalty and Social Representation

■ Sangathan Srijan Abhiyan Drives Organisational Revamp in Goa.

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: The Indian National Congress will appoint new District Congress Committee presidents in Goa based on merit, loyalty and balanced social representation, senior party leader Vijay Inder Singla announced in Panaji.

The move is part of the party's nationwide Sangathan Srijan Abhiyan aimed at strengthening grassroots structures and enhancing accountability. Singla, who has been assigned as observer for the newly created Kushavati district, said the selection process will involve a detailed assessment of caste representation, organisational performance, party commitment and public image.

He will spend two days



meeting office bearers, senior leaders, grassroots workers and social organisations across eight assembly segments that form the new district.

The restructuring follows the decision to bifurcate the former South Goa unit to improve administrative efficiency. According to state leadership, managing 20 constituencies under a single district president had become impractical. The new Kushavati district has been carved out to allow closer coordination and stronger local engagement.

A screening

mechanism will shortlist six potential candidates whose names will be forwarded to the central leadership.

The evaluation will consider experience, service record, active participation in party programmes and representation of diverse communities, including SC, ST and OBC groups.

Aspirants have been invited to submit applications through a structured process, with forms circulated online to promote transparency. Singla emphasised that newly appointed district presidents will be granted

substantial organisational authority but will also be subject to performance monitoring. Their work will be reviewed after three months, and those failing to meet expectations may be replaced.

The party also plans to revamp district level political affairs and executive committees, enabling local issues to be discussed and escalated more effectively. Through these measures, the Congress aims to build a more responsive and people connected structure ahead of future electoral challenges in Goa.



Goa Tourism To Showcase Regenerative Vision At SATTE 2026 In New Delhi

■ State To Highlight Spiritual Circuits, Hinterland Experiences And Sustainable Travel Initiatives

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: The Department of Tourism, Government of Goa, will participate in the South Asia Travel and Tourism Exchange 2026, scheduled from February 25 to 27 at Yashobhoomi, the India International Convention and Expo Centre in New Delhi. Widely regarded as one of South Asia's leading travel trade exhibitions, SATTE provides a major platform for destinations, hospitality brands and tourism stakeholders to build networks and expand business opportunities. At Stall No. A 62, Goa Tourism will present a broad spectrum of experiences aimed at reinforcing the state's identity as a year round destination focused on quality and regenerative tourism.

The pavilion will spotlight spiritual circuits such as Ekadasha Teertha, along with hinterland and village tourism, homestays, wellness retreats, adventure activities, heritage trails, monsoon experiences and cultural festivals that reflect Goa's living traditions.

The delegation will conduct business to business meetings with domestic and international tour operators, travel agents, destination management companies,

hospitality partners and aviation stakeholders.

The objective is to strengthen partnerships, enhance Goa's visibility in priority markets and attract travellers seeking immersive and meaningful experiences rooted in sustainability.

Tourism Minister Rohan Ashok Khaunte said the state's presence at SATTE aligns with its broader goal of promoting tourism that supports local communities, preserves cultural heritage and encourages responsible travel practices. He emphasised that the exhibition offers an important opportunity to showcase Goa's diverse offerings while fostering collaborations that ensure balanced and long term growth.

Director of Tourism Kedar Naik noted that SATTE remains a key forum for engaging with stakeholders across the travel ecosystem. He said this year's participation will focus on curated experiences that highlight Goa's evolving tourism narrative.

Through its engagement at SATTE 2026, Goa Tourism aims to consolidate its brand presence across domestic and international markets, placing sustainability, innovation and inclusivity at the core of its tourism strategy.

PONDA CONGRESS BLOCK OPPOSES BHATIKAR'S INDUCTION

its performance in Ponda during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, securing 8,500 votes for Congress candidate Capt. Viriato Fernandes.

The letter further raised concerns over Dr. Bhatikar's alleged ideological leanings and past associations with RSS-linked figures and leaders from parties allied with the BJP. It also questioned his political

loyalty, pointing to his recent resignation from the Maharashtra Gomantak Party (MGP) after being denied a ticket. The block committee warned that inducting leaders from rival political backgrounds could damage the Congress party's credibility in Goa and risk internal instability, particularly in light of past defections of Congress MLAs to the BJP.

Verekar Says Bhatikar's Entry Not Injustice, Calls For Ideological Clarity

With Dr. Bhatikar now set to join the Congress, Verekar said the party would need to assess his ideological alignment. "Now that he is joining the Congress party, we will first have to understand his ideology," he remarked. On speculation surrounding the Congress ticket for the upcoming Ponda Assembly by-election, Verekar maintained that it was too early to comment. "Regarding the by-poll ticket, I cannot speak

at this stage; making a statement now would be premature," he said. Verekar also rejected suggestions that Bhatikar's induction amounted to injustice towards him. "Bhatikar's induction is for strengthening the Congress party, so this is not an injustice to me," he asserted. His remarks come amid internal discussions within the Ponda Congress unit over Bhatikar's entry and the party's strategy for the crucial by-election.

Villagers, RGP MLA Viresh Borkar Demand Rollback of Section 39A Land Use Changes in Palem-Siridao

in Panaji, demanding that all survey numbers included under Section 39A of the TCP Act be rolled back immediately. The delegation strongly opposed the proposed land use changes under Section 39A, stating that the move would adversely

impact the village and its residents.

They called for the rollback of the proposed zone conversions in Palem-Siridao and urged the TCP department to respect the sentiments of the local community.

High Stakes Battle For CCP: BJP-Backed Babush Panel Files Nominations For All 30 Wards

contest and win from any of the 30 wards. Wishing my friend Babush Monserrate all the best — he's been my friend for four decades," Furtado said. Senior leader Uday Madkaikar asserted that the BJP-backed panel

is fully prepared for the electoral battle. "The next CCP Mayor will be chosen by the party. Our focus is to win all 30 wards and defeat Surendra Furtado in the upcoming election. We are 100% confident," he stated.

Preliminary Report On Baramati Learjet Crash To Be Made Public Within 30 Days

of operational and maintenance records, and laboratory analysis of components wherever necessary. While the preliminary findings will be shared within a month, a comprehensive final

report will follow later. The aircraft was fitted with two separate flight recorders. However, the Cockpit Voice Recorder, built by Honeywell, suffered thermal damage in the crash.

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India Joins US Led Pax Silica Alliance To Secure AI And Chip Supply Chains

■ Pact Signed At AI Impact Summit Aims To Build Trusted Tech Ecosystem And Reduce Strategic Dependencies

New Delhi: India on Friday formally joined Pax Silica, a United States led strategic alliance designed to safeguard global artificial intelligence and semiconductor supply chains. The partnership seeks to reduce reliance on non aligned nations while strengthening cooperation among trusted countries in critical and emerging technologies.

The agreement was signed on the concluding day of the India AI Impact Summit in New Delhi, a five day event that brought together policymakers, industry leaders and more than 600 AI focused start ups. Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said India's inclusion in the framework reflects growing global confidence in the country's talent base and technology ecosystem. He added that the



alliance would reinforce India's semiconductor manufacturing ambitions and chip design capabilities.

Vaishnaw noted that multiple semiconductor facilities are already being established in India, with the first plant expected to begin commercial production soon. Advanced two nanometer chip design work is underway, signalling the emergence of a comprehensive electronics and semiconductor ecosystem. He described Pax Silica as a critical step in consolidating

this progress. At the signing ceremony, US Ambassador Sergio Gorkin highlighted the broader geopolitical dimension of the alliance, framing it as a collaboration among free societies committed to innovation, secure infrastructure and technological resilience. Alphabet and Google CEO Sundar Pichai underscored the importance of India US cooperation in advancing AI for public benefit. He pointed to cross border teams working on major initiatives and reiterated confidence in India's long term AI growth trajectory.

The alliance follows the recent interim trade agreement between India and the United States aimed at easing tariffs and streamlining import and export controls.

Pax Silica brings together countries including Australia, Greece, Israel, Japan, Qatar, South Korea, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom to coordinate across the full technology value chain, from energy and critical minerals to advanced manufacturing and AI systems. Its core objectives include reducing coercive dependencies, building trusted digital infrastructure and ensuring advanced technologies are protected from misuse as AI reshapes global supply chains and economic systems.



Fresh Electoral Roll Revision Drive To Begin In April Across 22 States And UTs

■ Election Commission Expands Special Intensive Revision As First Phase Nears Completion

New Delhi: The Election Commission of India has announced that the next phase of the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls will commence in April, extending the exercise to 22 remaining states and Union Territories. Preparatory notices have been issued to several regions, including Delhi, Maharashtra and Karnataka, as the poll body moves to broaden the verification process nationwide. This

development follows the near completion of the first phase of the Special Intensive Revision in 12 states and Union Territories. The initiative was initially launched in June with Bihar and later expanded to other states such as West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. In West Bengal, where Assembly elections are approaching, the timeline for the revision has been extended to allow more thorough scrutiny of voter data.



"It Will Make India Stronger": Macron Backs 114 Rafale Fighter Jet Plan

■ French President Says Deal Will Boost Strategic Ties, Jobs And Local Manufacturing

New Delhi: French President Emmanuel Macron has defended India's proposed acquisition and co production of 114 Rafale fighter jets, asserting that the agreement would strengthen India's military capabilities while deepening strategic ties between the two nations. Speaking in New Delhi, Macron dismissed criticism surrounding the mega defence proposal and described it as a mutually beneficial partnership. He emphasised that the programme would

reinforce defence cooperation under the India France Special Global Strategic Partnership and generate employment opportunities in both countries. A strong focus on domestic manufacturing will form a central pillar of the arrangement, aligning with India's push to expand indigenous defence production. Macron underlined that a significant share of components and critical systems would be produced in India as part of the co production model.

AI Sovereignty And Global Collaboration Dominate India AI Impact Summit Discussions

■ Global Leaders, Industry Chiefs And Lawmakers Outline Competing Visions For India's AI Future

New Delhi: The India AI Impact Summit in New Delhi brought together political leaders, technology executives and policymakers, sparking wide ranging discussions on artificial intelligence, sovereignty and global cooperation. Former UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak described India as the ideal setting



for shaping the future of AI, citing its digital public infrastructure and innovation ecosystem. He said the country's platforms such as

Aadhaar, UPI and Ayushman Bharat provide a foundation for delivering AI driven services at scale. Sunak emphasised that AI safety and

progress must advance together and called for sustained international dialogue to ensure the technology benefits both developed and developing nations. Jeet Adani, executive director of the Adani Group, argued that India must build its own AI infrastructure rather than depend on imported systems.

"We Have Many Strong Warriors": Priyanka Gandhi Shrugs Off Defection Buzz In Assam

■ Congress Leader Says Party Ready For Tough Electoral Battle Ahead Of Assembly Polls

New Delhi: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday dismissed concerns over reports that senior party figure Bhupen Borah may switch to the Bharatiya Janata Party, saying political realignments

ahead of elections are common across the country. Addressing reporters in Guwahati after a meeting with members of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee, she remarked that movement of leaders between parties

tends to increase as elections approach and is not unusual in any state. She stressed that such developments would not affect the Congress party's resolve as it prepares for the upcoming Assam Assembly elections.



Projecting confidence, Priyanka Gandhi said the party would contest the polls with full determination.

Pre Seeding Format Sparks Debate Over Super 8 Imbalance

■ Group Structure Raises Questions on Fairness and Competitive Incentive.

New Delhi: The pre seeding model adopted for the Super 8 stage has triggered widespread debate after creating a striking imbalance between the two groups. The International Cricket Council allocated fixed positions to leading teams before the tournament began, placing designated group toppers into predetermined slots regardless of eventual first round outcomes.

As a result, Group 1 now features four sides that finished at the top of their respective groups: India national cricket



team, Zimbabwe national cricket team, West Indies cricket team and South Africa national cricket team. In contrast, Group 2 consists entirely of runners up, including Pakistan national cricket team, Sri Lanka national cricket team, England cricket team and New Zealand national cricket

team.

This arrangement ensures that two of the strongest performers from the opening round will be eliminated before the semi finals, while at least one team that did not top its group has a comparatively smoother route to the last four. Traditionally, tournament

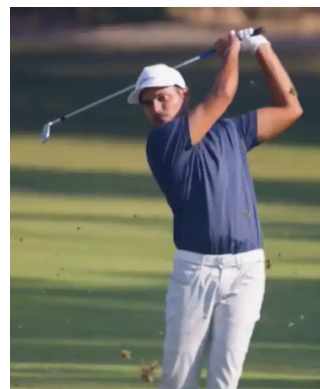
formats reward teams for finishing first, but critics argue that the current structure weakens that incentive.

South Africa's situation has drawn particular attention. Despite winning their group, they are effectively placed lower in the bracket because New Zealand had been assigned a higher pre tournament ranking. Consequently, once qualification for the Super 8 was confirmed, the remaining group fixtures carried limited impact on placement, reducing late stage suspense.

Manu Gandas Fires 64 to Share Lead with Shaurya Bhattacharya

■ Third Round Shake Up Sets Stage for Tense Finish at Tollygunge

New Delhi: Manu Gandas surged into joint lead with a brilliant six under 64 in the third round of the INR 1.5 crore Professional Golf Tour of India Players Championship 2026 at the Tollygunge Club in Kolkata. His impressive round lifted him to a total of 11 under 199, where he is tied with Shaurya Bhattacharya heading into the final day. Gandas, a former PGTI Order of Merit champion, began the day nine shots off



the lead but produced a flawless display marked by an eagle, five birdies and just one bogey. After a steady start, he ignited his charge with a birdie on the eighth, followed by another on the ninth.



FC Goa Aim to Build Momentum Against Mohammedan Sporting

■ Both Sides Seek Early Momentum in Shortened ISL Season

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: FC Goa may not have taken maximum points from their season opener, but head coach Manolo Marquez believes the draw was an important first step in a tightly contested campaign. The Gaurs came from behind to secure a 1-1 result against Inter Kashi last week, ensuring they avoided a slow start in the shortened 2025 to 26 edition of the Indian Super League. With only 13 matches to be played on a home and away basis, every point carries added significance. Manolo stressed the importance of getting off the mark early, noting that staying close to the leaders will be crucial in a compressed schedule where slipups

can prove costly. FC Goa now travel to Kolkata to face Mohammedan Sporting Club at the Kishore Bharati Krirangan on Friday in the opening fixture of Match Week 2. Both teams are chasing their first win of the campaign. Mohammedan Sporting began their season with a narrow 1-0 defeat against Jamshedpur FC. Despite the loss, the Kolkata side displayed defensive discipline and organisation under head coach Mehrajuddin Wadoo, fielding an all Indian lineup. However, they struggled to create clear chances in the attacking third. Playing at home, they will aim to turn their structured approach into points in front of their supporters.

Goa Cricketers Earn South Zone Call Up for Senior Women's Inter Zonal Trophy

■ State Representation Confirmed for Bengaluru Tournament in March

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: The Goa Cricket Association has announced the selection of its representatives in the South Zone squad for the forthcoming Senior Women's Inter Zonal One Day Trophy. The tournament is scheduled to take place in Bengaluru from March 5 to March 15, 2026. Purvaja Verlekar has been named in the South Zone team, marking a significant milestone in her cricketing journey.



Poorva Bhaidkar has been listed as a standby player, ready to step in if required during the competition. Adding to Goa's presence in the squad, Rakshanda Pilankar has been appointed as the Performance Analyst for



the South Zone team. The inclusion of these representatives underscores the steady progress of women's cricket in Goa and reflects the growing opportunities available to players and support staff from the



state. Selection to the inter zonal tournament is regarded as a major achievement, as it brings together top performers from across the southern region to compete at a high level. The association expressed pride in the accomplishments of the selected player and support staff member, noting that their recognition at the zonal level highlights the development of talent within Goa's cricketing framework.

Desserts N More Avengers Clinch Dominant Six Wicket Victory

■ Clinical Bowling and Quickfire Chase Seal Win in GSB Unity Cup 3.0

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: Desserts N More Avengers delivered a commanding performance to register a comprehensive six wicket win over Vimson Panjim Powerplay in the GSB Unity Cup 3.0 cricket tournament at the MCC ground in Margao. The match, organised by the Goa GSB Sports and Charitable Trust, was



played under floodlights on Wednesday. After winning the toss, Desserts N More Avengers chose to field and executed their plans effectively. They restricted Vimson

Panjim Powerplay to 122 for 9 in their allotted 20 overs through disciplined bowling and tight fielding. Arsh Sardesai stood out for Vimson with an aggressive 55 off 34 deliveries, striking four boundaries and three sixes. Gaurish Agni and Nimay Kamat chipped in with 17 runs each, but the rest of the batting line up struggled to build partnerships. Siddhesh



Prabhu Alvencar led the bowling effort for the Avengers with figures of 2 for 15, while the supporting bowlers maintained steady pressure to prevent any late surge. Chasing 123 for victory, Desserts N More Avengers made light work of the target. The batters approached the chase positively and reached 125 for 4 in just 13.2 overs.