



MLA Viresh Rejects Abeyance Offer, Insists On Scrapping 39A Conversions

■ RGP MLA says agitation will continue until all nine St Andre zone change proposals are revoked

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: Defying growing health concerns, St Andre MLA Viresh Borkar today reaffirmed that he will persist with his indefinite hunger strike until Section 39A of the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Act is scrapped by the State government.

Borkar's fast entered its fourth day, even as Chief Minister Pramod Sawant personally visited him at Azad Maidan and urged him to withdraw the agitation, citing his declining health and the need for discussions within the Assembly.

The protest began last Friday with a sit-in outside the TCP office and was later shifted to Azad Maidan, where the Revolutionary Goans Party (RGP) MLA



launched an indefinite fast demanding the repeal of Section 39A — a provision critics allege enables large-scale land conversions.

According to RGP sources, Borkar's health parameters dropped late Monday night, leading to his admission to a private hospital. After receiving medical attention, he returned to the protest site on Tuesday morning and resumed his fast. Doctors have advised him to drink at least three litres of

water per hour to prevent dehydration. While he has agreed to consume water, he has refused any solid food until the government announces a rollback of the provision.

Speaking to the media after meeting Borkar, the Chief Minister said he had urged the legislator to raise the issue in the Assembly. "We can deliberate on the matter in the proper forum and arrive at a conclusion. I have conveyed a positive approach regarding

his demands," Sawant said, adding that he was concerned about Borkar's health and had also consulted doctors attending to him.

Later in the evening, Speaker Ganesh Gaonkar met Borkar and appealed to him to reconsider his decision. A joint meeting was also held at the protest site involving Leader of Opposition Yuri Alemao, AAP MLA Venzy Viegas, villagers and civil society members, who

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Officers Must Maintain Decorum First: Borkar

■ St Andre MLA says TCP officials failed to respond to queries during protest visit

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: St Andre MLA Viresh Borkar said that government officials must uphold decorum before accusing elected representatives and protesters of misconduct, amid the

continuing row over Section 39A of the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Act.

Speaking to the media after a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC), Borkar said he had

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"35 Million People Said Pakistan PM Would Have Died": Trump's Operation Sindoor Remark Sparks Online Frenzy

Viral clip from State of the Union fuels confusion over his claim of averting nuclear war between India and Pakistan

New Delhi: US President Donald Trump has reignited debate over the May 2025 India Pakistan conflict with fresh remarks about his role during Operation Sindoor. Speaking during his State of the Union address, Trump asserted that his intervention prevented a potential nuclear confrontation between the two countries, a claim that rapidly gained traction across social media platforms. Trump stated that India and Pakistan were on the brink of nuclear war and suggested that his mediation brought about a ceasefire.

Time-Bound Replies Assured On TCP Issues, Says Borkar After BAC Meet

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: Amid his ongoing indefinite hunger strike, St Andre MLA Viresh Borkar on Wednesday attended the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting and said clear assurances have been given that questions related to the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Department will be answered within a fixed



timeframe. Speaking to the media while seated in a wheelchair, Borkar said the key concern raised was the delay in furnishing replies to legislative questions. He stated that

both Speaker Ganesh Gaonkar and Chief Minister Pramod Sawant have instructed the Chief Secretary to ensure that all TCP-related responses are submitted within the stipulated period.

"Assurances have been given that replies will be provided on time. When answers are delayed or not given properly, protests become necessary,"

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Opposition Must Unite Over Borkar Manhandling: Alemao

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: Leader of Opposition Yuri Alemao has urged all Opposition parties to close ranks over the alleged manhandling of RGP MLA Viresh Borkar, terming the incident serious and unacceptable. Alemao directly held Chief Minister Pramod Sawant responsible, questioning whether such police action could have taken place without the knowledge of



the Chief Minister, who also oversees the Home Department. Condemning the incident, Alemao said an elected representative being allegedly mishandled cannot be justified under

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Vijai Flags Break from Assembly Convention Over Budget Timing

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: Fatorda MLA Vijai Sardesai has criticised the State government for what he termed a departure from established Assembly convention by commencing the legislative session and presenting the Budget on the same day.

Addressing the issue, the Fatorda MLA said he had raised his concerns



with Speaker Ganesh Gaonkar, questioning why the session could not have begun a day earlier on

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"Protest Is Not a License for Anarchy": Former Judges Condemn Shirtless Demonstration at AI Summit

■ Over 270 retired officials call incident at Bharat Mandapam a blow to national image

New Delhi: More than 270 former judges and retired civil and police officials have sharply criticised a shirtless protest staged by members of the Indian Youth Congress during the AI Impact Summit at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. In a joint statement titled "A National Disgrace at Bharat Mandapam," the signatories described



the episode as a serious affront to national dignity at a time when India was hosting global technology

leaders and international delegates.

Among those who endorsed the statement were former Delhi High Court judge S N Dhinra and former Tripura Director General of Police B L Vohra. The group alleged that the protest was not an impulsive act of dissent but a planned disruption.

A Land Too Costly for Its Own People

The hunger strike by RGP MLA Viresh Borkar over Section 39A is not just another political protest. It reflects a growing frustration among Goans who feel their land is slipping away, piece by piece, with little effort from those in power to protect it. The issue has struck a nerve because it goes far beyond one provision in the Town and Country Planning framework. For many, it is about survival in a state where land has become scarce and unaffordable.

Borkar's refusal to end his fast despite assurances from Chief Minister Pramod Sawant shows how deeply the sentiment runs. The government has indicated a willingness to keep Section 39A in abeyance, but the demand from protesters is clear. They want the provision scrapped entirely. To them, a temporary pause does not solve a permanent problem.

The anger is rooted in a widely shared belief that no serious effort has been made to save Goa's land. Over the years, people have watched fields, orchards and open hillsides gradually give way to development. Zoning changes and land conversions may be justified in the name of growth, but on the ground, they have created a sense that Goa is being reshaped without regard for the people who live there.

Land is no longer just an asset in Goa. It has become a luxury. Prices have risen to the point where many Goans cannot afford to buy even a small plot. Families who once assumed they would build homes near their villages now find that dream out of reach. For younger generations, especially, the idea of owning land in Goa is becoming increasingly unrealistic.

This raises a troubling question. If Goans cannot



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afford land in Goa, where are they expected to go?

For some, the answer is already becoming clear. Border areas outside the state such as Dodamarg, anda and Sawantwadi, are being seen as alternatives. The fact that Goans may have to move beyond their own state simply to afford a home has become a powerful symbol of what many see as a failure of policy.

This is why Section 39A has become such a flashpoint. It is not just about legal provisions or planning procedures. It represents a larger fear that land conversions are happening too easily and too quickly. Whether it is a hill slope, a field or a green zone, every conversion reinforces the belief that Goa's land is being steadily consumed.

The protests and the hunger strike reflect a deeper anxiety about identity and belonging. Land in Goa has always carried emotional value. It is tied to family history, village life and a sense of place. When people feel that land is disappearing, they also feel that their connection to Goa is weakening.

The government faces a difficult task. Development cannot simply stop. Goa needs infrastructure, housing and economic activity. But development that leaves locals behind is bound to create resentment. When people feel they are being pushed out of their own state, the reaction is inevitable.

Keeping Section 39A in abeyance may be seen by the government as a step forward. For protesters, it is only a delay. The demand to scrap the provision entirely reflects a lack of trust that temporary measures will lead to meaningful change.

What is unfolding now is not just a policy dispute. It is a warning sign. The anger surrounding land issues has been building quietly for years, and it is now coming to the surface. The hunger strike has simply given that anger a focal point.

If the concerns are not addressed, the protests may subside, but the frustration will remain. Because at its heart, this issue is not just about one section of a law.

It is about whether ordinary Goans will still have a place to live in the land they call home.

LETTERS

Keep the Focus on Section 39A

The ongoing agitation to scrap Section 39A has drawn widespread public support because people see it as a genuine fight to protect Goa's land and future. At such a crucial moment, it is important that those associated with the movement remain focused on the core issue and avoid unnecessary distractions.

Recent statements by Manoj Parab have struck a needlessly dramatic and aggressive note. This approach risks derailing a movement that has so far been defined by discipline and public goodwill. Goa has already seen enough of combative political styles, and there is no need for anyone to drift into becoming another Vishwajit Rane. Such posturing only shifts attention away from the real demand, which is the scrapping of Section 39A.

Raising questions about alliance politics at this stage is particularly unfortunate. The movement is not about political alignments but about safeguarding Goa's land. Introducing political angles now only weakens the clarity and unity that the agitation requires. In contrast, Viresh Borkar has shown how a principled and calm approach can inspire confidence. His measured conduct and willingness to undertake a hunger strike for the cause have earned him respect across the state. That goodwill is one of the movement's greatest strengths and must not be squandered.

What this moment demands is calm, disciplined and measured leadership. Unnecessary anger and aggression will only dilute the message. The cause is too important for that. It is time for calmer heads to guide the movement forward and keep the focus firmly where it belongs — on scrapping Section 39A.

- Sandeep Kambl, Ribandar

Our Leaders Must Be Humble and Sincere

Those in public life must serve as moral exemplars, guided by ethics and integrity in both word and action. Having pledged to uphold the public trust, they must act with humility at all times, never losing sight of the fact that they are servants of the people. Elected by the people and sustained by public funds, they are accountable to the very citizens they are meant to serve. Leadership must always be exercised with honesty, respect and a genuine commitment to truth.

Those chosen to govern should strive to reflect the wishes and aspirations of the people. Their duty is not merely to hold office but to deliver with sincerity and responsibility. True leadership is rooted in humility, not arrogance. When humility is absent, public service risks turning into self-service, weakening the bond of trust between leaders and citizens.

For any society to progress and prosper, it needs individuals in public life who embody competence, honesty, dedication and experience. Above all, they must possess a spirit of selfless determination. Without these qualities, governance becomes hollow and public confidence erodes. We simply cannot afford to have wolves in sheep's clothing occupying positions of responsibility. As Albert Camus wisely observed, "A man without ethics is a wild beast loosed upon this world." These words remain as relevant today as ever. Ethical leadership is not an option but a necessity if we are to build a just and trustworthy society.

- Aires Rodrigues, London

Birthday Special

A man with vision, committed for people's service

Shri. Rohan A. Khaunte

Minister for Tourism, Information Technology,
Electronics and Communication, Printing & Stationery
Govt. of Goa | MLA - PORVORIM



Policy, purpose and progress: Goa Tourism under Shri Rohan Khaunte

Leadership is most meaningful when it aligns vision with action. As the Hon'ble Minister for Tourism, IT, Electronics & Communications, and Printing & Stationery, Shri Rohan Ashok Khaunte marks his birthday, it is a moment to reflect on a governance approach that mirrors the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, a roadmap towards a developed, self-reliant and globally competitive India, this leadership philosophy translates national aspiration into local action. While advancing the Hon'ble Chief Minister's roadmap of balanced development and future-ready infrastructure for Goa. Across tourism, technology and constituency initiatives, this alignment of policy, purpose and progress has shaped a transformative phase rooted in responsibility, innovation and inclusive growth.

Setting a new national benchmark through Regenerative Tourism

One of the most defining contributions of this leadership has been Goa becoming the first State in India to formally adopt and promote Regenerative Tourism. Launched in January 2023, this was not an incremental policy shift, but a fundamental rethinking of how tourism should function. By championing a regenerative approach, the Hon'ble Minister placed Goa at the forefront of national tourism discourse moving beyond sustainability towards a model that actively strengthens communities, culture, ecology, and the economy.

Goa Beyond Beaches: redefining the state's tourism identity

A visible outcome of this strategic clarity has been the successful rollout of the Goa Beyond Beaches initiative. Moving beyond a single-dimensional narrative, tourism promotion has expanded to highlight cultural traditions, hinterland experiences, spiritual journeys, wellness practices, and community-led tourism. This reorientation has helped position Goa as a year-round, experience-led destination, where heritage villages, local festivals, traditional livelihoods, wellness retreats, and spiritual circuits form a central part of the tourism landscape.

Strengthening wellness tourism

The Memorandum of Understanding with Gomantak Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Shiroda and All India Institute of Ayurveda, Dhargal have ensured that Ayurveda, yoga, and holistic wellness offerings in Goa are aligned with traditional knowledge systems, reinforcing trust and positioning the State as a serious wellness destination.

Structured growth of spiritual tourism

Spiritual tourism has received focused attention through thoughtfully curated initiatives. The Ekadasha Teertha, highlighting eleven significant temples across Goa, has helped structure meaningful spiritual circuits rooted in heritage and community participation. Complementing this is the foundation laid for Gomant Sarita Poojan at Narve on the River Mandovi along with the beautification of Harvalem Waterfall and Rudreshwar Temple in Bicholim under ecotourism.

Bringing tourism to the hinterland

A key aspect has been ensuring tourism reaches beyond established centres. Through the Homestay and Bed-and-Breakfast Scheme, tourism has expanded into talukas such as Sattari, Dharbandora, Sanguem, Bicholim, Ponda, Quepem, and Canacona. Supported by a financial assistance of ₹2 lakh per eligible homestay and Bed & Breakfast, and with a conscious emphasis on women-led ownership.

Policy reforms supporting responsible tourism

Alongside destination development, recent policy interventions have focused on strengthening governance and improving the on-ground tourism experience. The Goa State Shack Policy 2023-26 has streamlined beachfront services and created structured livelihood opportunities, particularly for local youth. Complementing this, the amendment to the Goa Tourist Places (Protection and Maintenance) Act, 2001, passed in 2025, has strengthened enforcement against nuisance at tourist locations. Ease of Doing Business measures have further simplified regulatory processes, encouraging greater private sector participation and investment.

People-centric infrastructure with cultural value

Tourism infrastructure development reflects a people-first approach. Projects under Swadesh Darshan, the development of Town Square in Porvorim, and the creation of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Digital Museum at Farmagudi, Ponda, showcase a commitment to public spaces that celebrate history, culture, and community identity.

Sport adds momentum to Goa's tourism growth

Sports tourism has emerged as a strong pillar within Goa's diversified tourism strategy, with a series of major sporting events being hosted in association with the Department of Tourism, Government of Goa. Initiatives such as the IRONMAN 70.3 Goa, the Rainforest Challenge (RFC), Fide World Cup, Goa Rugby 7s 2025 - Season 2, and the recently held World Legends Pro T20 League, Goa reflect a coordinated push to position Goa as a destination for high-quality sporting experiences.

Campaigns that reflect leadership vision

Destination campaigns such as Glow On Arrival, Feels Like Goa, and Live the Feeling mirror the Minister's larger vision of tourism as lived experience rather than passive consumption.

Strategic partnerships driving scale and credibility

Goa Tourism has built a strong ecosystem of strategic partnerships. Collaborations with Airbnb, MakeMyTrip, Agoda, Mastercard, Fly91, and IRONMAN, alongside cultural and spiritual partners such as Temple Connect, have strengthened connectivity, sports tourism, wellness tourism, destination marketing, and international outreach while remaining aligned with Goa's core values.

Consistent global engagement

Goa's sustained presence at major platforms such as TTF, OTM, GITS, BLTM, ITB Asia - Singapore, World Travel Market London, and the Arabian Travel Market, Dubai, reflects a leadership-driven focus on positioning Goa as a diversified and responsible destination.

Strengthening Visitor Experience through Digital Governance

Goa Tourism has enhanced visitor ease, safety, and confidence through technology-driven governance. The 24x7 Tourist Helpline (1364), the Let's Goa portal, and the One Map Goa GIS system have improved access and coordination across services. Initiatives like the Goa Taxi App and the Beach Vigil App further ensure reliable transport and real-time reporting for safer, better-managed beaches.

National and Global Recognition

Under the leadership of Tourism Minister Rohan Ashok Khaunte, Goa Tourism has earned national and international acclaim. The Minister has been honoured with awards such as Tourism Minister of the Year at the PATWA International Travel Awards (alongside ITB Berlin) and Excellence in Tourism Leadership at the Today's Travellers Awards. Goa has also been widely recognised for regenerative tourism, MICE and wedding tourism, hinterland promotion, spiritual tourism, and destination branding.

A Leadership-Led Path Forward

As the Hon'ble Minister marks another year, Goa Tourism continues to advance with clarity and conviction. It is a journey shaped by vision, consistency, and the belief that when guided with purpose, tourism can become a powerful instrument for lasting prosperity and pride for the State.

Goa's IT & Digital Transformation

Under the leadership of Shri Rohan A. Khaunte, Goa is rapidly evolving into a premier digital hub, earning its reputation as the Creative Capital of India. Through a focus on infrastructure, skilling, citizen-centric e-governance and a thriving startup culture, the state is setting a new benchmark for technological growth.

Expansion of digital infrastructure and connectivity

Goa has made significant strides in connectivity by expanding its free public Wi-Fi network to 135 hotspots across major public spaces, complemented by the rollout of 4G and 5G towers. Furthermore, the Goa Broadband Network (GBBN) has successfully extended high-speed connectivity to 1,492 government offices. The state is also exploring satellite internet solutions for remote areas with Starlink. On the industrial front, the Electronics Manufacturing Cluster (EMC) in Tuem, Pernem, is gaining momentum.

Seamless e-governance and rural service access

The Goa Online portal offers 265 services across 41 departments. The platform has recorded over 11 lakh digital interactions (in the previous year) and is currently integrating an AI chatbot to enhance user experience. The Goa One Map GIS portal is another e-governance platform that integrates geospatial data from 32 government departments into 273

Viksit Porvorim – A Model Constituency

Yoga Park: Wellness as a Community Priority

In an era where lifestyle-related ailments are on the rise, the creation of a dedicated Yoga Park stands as a conscious investment in preventive healthcare. The park provides residents, senior citizens, and youth with a serene environment for yoga, meditation, and holistic fitness practices. By integrating wellness into public infrastructure, the initiative reinforces the belief that healthy communities form the foundation of sustainable development.

Divya Ranjan Park: Green Spaces for Community Wellbeing

Divyaranjan Park stands as Goa's first dedicated children's park thoughtfully designed for children with disabilities. It reflects the belief that every child, regardless of physical ability, is a valued future citizen who deserves safe, joyful spaces to learn, explore, and play alongside their peers. As the State's first park of its kind, Divyaranjan Park underscores the importance of universal design, demonstrating that true development lies in creating spaces that are accessible, equitable, and welcoming to all.

Foundation Stone for Digital Library at Housing Board: Investing in Knowledge Infrastructure

The laying of the foundation stone for a Digital Library at the Housing Board marks a forward-looking step towards educational empowerment. This initiative aims to provide students and youth with access to e-learning tools, research material, and skill-development resources. It will strengthen academic support systems while preparing the next generation.

Town Square Development: Creating a Vibrant Civic Heart

A well-designed Town Square serves as the cultural and social heartbeat of a community. The envisioned development seeks to create an inclusive public space where cultural events, social gatherings, and civic engagement can flourish. Such infrastructure strengthens public participation and reinforces a shared sense of identity.

Empowering The Youth

With the Socorro Multipurpose Ground nearing completion of its first phase, the constituency is witnessing the creation of multi-functional spaces designed to host tournaments, community events, and recreational activities. Dedicated pickleball courts, futsal grounds across the three panchayats, and cricket training centres at Khelangan and Penha de Franca reflect a deliberate push to institutionalise grassroots sports. The upcoming full-fledged cricket ground at Mudder, Carrem, Socorro will further elevate sporting standards. The development of the Porvorim Gymkhana Multipurpose Ground marks another significant milestone in strengthening local sports infrastructure.

Strengthening Healthcare Access

The establishment of a Dialysis Unit significantly reduces the burden on patients who previously had to travel long distances for life-saving treatment. By bringing specialised healthcare closer to residents, this initiative not only enhances medical access but also offers dignity, comfort, and relief to families.

Swachh and Future-Ready Porvorim

With the completion of Sewerage Phase I and the commissioning of a 100 KLD Packaged Treatment Plant on a pilot basis, long-standing sewage concerns, particularly in older residential areas, are being systematically addressed. The Sewerage Treatment Plant along the Guirim Highway will soon connect homes and government institutions, significantly improving waste management across the constituency. Additional treatment facilities are being tendered for areas such as Carrem and Vaddem, while groundwork for Phase II is already underway.

Water Security as a Development Priority

The delivery of the 15 MLD Water Treatment Plant, along with a pumping station, significantly strengthened water availability in Porvorim. To further augment supply, overhead reservoirs and ground storage facilities are being developed across Socorro, Penha de Franca, and Salvador do Mundo.

Modern Power Infrastructure

Porvorim's power infrastructure has undergone substantial transformation over the years. Phase I of underground cabling was successfully completed, and Phase II is progressing across Socorro, Penha de Franca, and Salvador do Mundo. High-mast lighting installations have enhanced safety across public areas, while new transformers and the upcoming 33/11 KVA substation in Saligao will further stabilise supply.

Reimagining Roads, Safety and Traffic Management

The much-anticipated flyover connecting Porvorim Bazaar, Tisk-Socorro to Teen Building-Penha de Franca will address long-standing commuter challenges. A new link road from Baker Street to The Green Hill promises smoother vehicular movement, while road widening projects across the three panchayats are improving accessibility and safety. The construction of well-designed footpaths enhances pedestrian convenience.

A Holistic Vision of Governance

On this special occasion, these projects stand as tangible markers of leadership rooted in community upliftment, ensuring that development is not merely visible, but deeply impactful in the everyday lives of the people.

layers. To ensure no citizen is left behind, the Gramin Mitra Yojana brings government services directly to the doorsteps of rural residents. This initiative is supported by a network of Common Service Centres (CSCs).



Selfie with Goa Startup Innovator

Driving innovation through robust startup ecosystem

Goa's startup landscape is flourishing, with 783 DPIIT-registered startups now calling the state home. Notably, nearly 50% of these (369) are women-led. Backed by the Goa Startup Policy 2025, which offers 12 structured schemes including seed capital, mentorship and

reimbursements, the ecosystem continues to strengthen across sectors. Flagship initiatives such as the Goa Open Innovation Challenge and the Goa Startup Accelerator Programme have positioned the state as an attractive hub for innovators and global digital nomads. This growth has also earned Goa national recognition as 'Best Performer for Developing a Strong Startup Ecosystem'.

Making Goa future-ready with Goa AI Mission 2027

Goa is also adapting AI and emerging technologies. The Goa AI Mission 2027 launched during the Minister's tenure aims to integrate AI into governance and citizen services and position the state as a leading AI sandbox for India. The mission focuses on four pillars: Skilling, Startups, Capital, Governance and Infrastructure.

Bridging the digital divide through skilling

Some key initiatives include, the Free Laptop Distribution Scheme for meritorious SC/ST students that focuses on equitable growth, IT Knowledge Centres (ITKC) that enhances employability through basic tech skills and Mahila Digital Shashaktikaran Yojana (MDSY) that empowers women through specialized digital literacy training. Drone training programmes where Drone Didis are being empowered in this emerging field and hands-on training in 3D-printing are another highlight.

Goa Govt Disburses Rs 85 Lakh Compensation to Birch Fire Victims' Families

■ Court told ex gratia payments made to deceased and injured after Arpora nightclub blaze

Team Goemkarponn

PORVORIM: The Goa government has sanctioned a total of Rs 85 lakh in relief to the families of those who lost their lives in the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub fire, according to submissions made before the Bombay High Court at Goa. The affidavit, filed in Suo Motu Public Interest Litigation, detailed the compensation disbursed



to the victims' families and those injured in the December 6, 2025, blaze in Arpora.

The North Goa Collector's office, functioning under the District Disaster Management Authority, approved Rs 85 lakh

as ex gratia relief for the legal heirs of 17 deceased victims. Each family received Rs 5 lakh—Rs 4 lakh from the State Disaster Response Fund and Rs 1 lakh from the Goa Disaster Management Fund Scheme. Subsequent tranches were also sanctioned for other deceased victims.

For the families of five Nepalese nationals who died in the fire, an additional Rs 35 lakh

was provided, with each family receiving Rs 7 lakh. Ultimately, families of all deceased victims were compensated Rs 7 lakh each, comprising Rs 5 lakh from the State and Rs 2 lakh from the Centre. Non-Indian victims' families received a consolidated Rs 7 lakh per family. Injured survivors were also compensated, with both State and Central governments contributing Rs 50,000 each.

Youth Found Unconscious At Betalbatim, Declared Brought Dead At SGDH

Team Goemkarponn

MARGAO: A 21-year-old youth was declared brought dead at the South Goa District Hospital (SGDH), Margao, after he was found lying unconscious at his flat in Nagvaddo, Betalbatim, on Monday evening.

According to Colva Police, information was received on 23/03/2026 at around 6:32 pm from an unknown caller stating that a person was lying unconscious at a flat in Nagvaddo, Betalbatim. Police personnel rushed to the spot, however, it was

learnt that the individual had already been shifted to the South Goa District Hospital, Margao, by a 108 ambulance.

Upon visiting SGDH, doctors declared the person brought dead.

During inquiry, the deceased was identified as Sivraj Gandharbha (21), a native of Nepal and presently residing at Nagvaddo, Betalbatim. Preliminary inquiry revealed that the deceased was allegedly heavily intoxicated and had fallen from his bicycle while returning to his flat.

Elderly Woman Succumbs To Burn Injuries At GMC Bambolim

Team Goemkarponn

MARGAO: An 80-year-old woman from Telaulim, Navelim, succumbed to burn injuries while undergoing treatment at Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMC) Bambolim. According to police information received from the Casualty Police of GMC at around 3:50 am on 24/02/2026, the deceased was identified as Saudina Terezinha Cruzinha Fernandes (80), a resident of



Telaulim, Navelim. She had been admitted to the hospital following burn injuries sustained at her residence. During enquiry with family members, it was revealed that on 16/02/2026, while she was in the kitchen, hot water accidentally fell on her legs.

Mass protests across Goa show government heading in wrong direction: Jose Philip D'Souza

Team Goemkarponn

VASCO: Amid mounting public anger over Section 39 A of the TCP Act, Former Minister and NCP State President Jose Philip D'Souza on Tuesday afternoon said the wave of protests erupting simultaneously across Goa indicates that the government is "moving in the wrong direction." He was reacting to the massive demonstration staged outside the



residence of TCP Minister Vishwajeet Rane.

Addressing reporters, D'Souza said elected representatives and local bodies must be taken into confidence before major decisions are made. "When protests break out in different parts of Goa at

the same time, it sends a clear message that people are unhappy. Governments are elected by the people, and it is mandatory to consult stakeholders, including panch members and local representatives, before taking crucial decisions," he said.

D'Souza also referred to his meeting with St Andre MLA Viresh Borkar, who had earlier gone on a hunger strike over the issue and was allegedly manhandled during a

protest. "An MLA cannot be treated in such a manner. There must be accountability and appropriate action on the police force in such cases," he stated.

Recalling his own tenure in public life, D'Souza said he had been elected twice and had served as a cabinet minister but had never witnessed such widespread unrest across multiple issues at the same time.

"Goa is Not for Sale" - Vijai Moves Bill to Restore Land Laws, Joins 'Enough is Enough' Movement

Team Goemkarponn

FATORDA: In a strong move to protect Goa's land and identity, Fatorda MLA and Goa Forward Party President, Vijai Sardesai has announced that he moved a Private Member's Bill in the upcoming Budget Session to roll back

controversial amendments that have left Goan villages vulnerable to exploitation.

Sardesai revealed that he received a Draft Bill from Retd. Chief Justice Ferdinando Rebello under the banner of the "Enough is Enough" movement, a document he described as carrying the pain,

anger, and determination of thousands of Goans watching their land being systematically erased.

The proposed Bill seeks to restore the status quo ante prior to the controversial amendments to Section 17(2) and Section 39A of the Town and Country

Planning (TCP) Act, as well as provisions under the Goa Restriction on Transfer of Agricultural Land Act, 2023. "This is not development. What we are witnessing is the destruction of our villages and a silent assault on Goa's identity," Sardesai said.

GOACAN Questions DRS Scheme, Calls It Unfair to Consumers

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: The Goa Consumer Action Network (GOACAN) has strongly criticised the proposed Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), claiming it unfairly places the burden on consumers while failing to tackle major environmental problems. GOACAN convenor Roland Martins argued that the scheme's environmental justification is questionable, stating that the initiative does not address more serious contributors to pollution such as thin plastic carry bags and other single-use plastic items. Instead, he said, the focus appears to be on selected types of packaging materials. Martins also maintained that consumers would be



inconvenienced under the system, as they would have to spend time returning used containers without receiving any meaningful financial benefit. He pointed out that many people currently sell empty bottles and plastic items to scrap collectors and earn some money, a practice that could be affected if the DRS is implemented. Describing the initiative in strong terms, Martins alleged that the scheme works against consumer interests and suggested that its underlying intentions should be examined more closely.

Leela Club in Anjuna Under Scrutiny Over Alleged Lack of Licences

■ Authorities inspect beachside structure following complaints of violations

Team Goemkarponn

ANJUNA: The Leela Club, a five-storey building situated close to Ozrant Beach in Anjuna, is facing scrutiny after reports surfaced that it may be operating without the necessary permissions from

the local village panchayat.

Details accessed through the Right to Information (RTI) Act indicate that the Anjuna Village Panchayat has not granted either a trade licence or a No Objection Certificate (NOC) to the establishment located under

Survey No. 213/6.

In an official response, Panchayat Secretary Rui Cardozo confirmed that the panchayat has not issued any authorisation for the club to operate. Anjuna Sarpanch Surendra Govekar also stated that the trade licence application has

not been approved because the establishment has failed to obtain mandatory clearances from other concerned departments.

"We have not issued a trade licence as the required NOCs from relevant authorities have not been submitted," Govekar said.

Rs 2 Lakh Each Distributed To 85 Traditional Mell Troupes Under Mand Sanskriti Yojana

Team Goemkarponn

CANACONA – Sanction orders granting Rs 2 lakh each to 85 traditional Shigmotav mell/troupes from Sanguem, Quepem and Canacona were distributed on Tuesday under the Department of Art & Culture's ambitious 'Mand Sanskriti Yojana'.

Distributing the sanction letters, Minister for Art & Culture Ramesh Tawadkar said that the government will introduce various schemes to preserve traditional festivals, rituals and fairs across the State. He informed that a dedicated scheme has also been prepared to support the Dhillo festival and announced three prizes for the best reels made on traditional Shigmo troupes. The awards



will be presented during this year's government-organised Shigmotav celebrations.

Tawadkar said that a cultured individual, society and village give the true identity to a State, and this identity must be maintained through traditional art, folklore and festivals. Referring to Goa's image, he said that while some associate the State with feni, beaches, casinos and drug culture, only a small percentage of people are involved in such activities.

"Efforts are being made to remove this unnecessary stigma on the majority of Goans," he said.

Under the Mand Sanskriti Yojana, each Shigmo mell receives financial assistance of Rs 2 lakh to purchase musical instruments such as dhol, tanse and ghumat, along with traditional costumes and attire required for Shigmo fairs. The assistance is aimed at preserving Shigmotav in its authentic traditional form. Troupes seeking

the grant must have an account in a nationalised bank.

Tawadkar also announced financial assistance for sports events to three active clubs in Canacona.

Among those present on the occasion were BJP South Goa President Prabhakar Gaonkar, CMC Chairperson Laxman Pagi, ZP (Poinguinim) Ajay Lalayekar, BJP Canacona Mandal President Prabhakar Gaonkar, Dy Collector Pratap Naik Gaonkar, Sarpanch (Agonda) Nilesh Pagi, Sarpanch (Khotigao) Jayesh Gaonkar, Sarpanch (Poinguinim) Savita Tawadkar, Sarpanch (Shristhal) Sejal Gaonkar and CMC Councillor Ramakant Naik Gaonkar.



Congress Leaders Gherao Electricity Officials Over Excessive Power Bills In Canacona

Team Goemkarponn

CANACONA: Congress leaders led by former Canacona Congress candidate Janardhan S. Bhandari gheraoed the Assistant Engineer of the Electricity Department in Canacona, raising strong objections over what they termed as faulty and excessive electricity bills issued to consumers.

Bhandari, along with JanaSena Warriors and Citizens of Canacona, met the Electricity Department officials and demanded immediate corrective

measures to address the issue, stating that residents are facing severe hardship due to inflated bills.

People across Goa are witnessing an unexpected surge in electricity bills, placing heavy financial pressure on common families," Bhandari said, urging the department to resolve the matter at the earliest. South Goa GPYC District President Prahlay Bhagat said that leaders of the Indian National Congress staged the gherao to seek immediate clarification on the sudden hike in bills.



SAG Floats ₹22.92 Cr Tender For Sports Complex At Shree Balram School In Amone

Team Goemkarponn

CANACONA: Sports Authority of Goa (SAG) has floated an e-tender worth ₹22.92 crore for the construction of a sports complex at Shree Balram Residential High School in Amone, Canacona, a school founded by Sports Minister Ramesh Tawadkar.

According to the tender notice issued by the Executive Director of SAG on behalf of the Governor of Goa, online bids have been invited in a two-bid system (e-tendering mode) for the construction of the sports complex at Shree

Balram Residential School, Amone. The estimated cost of the project is ₹22,92,86,432.70 (₹22.92 crore). The last date for online submission of bids is March 9, 2026, up to 12 noon, while the tender will be opened online on March 10, 2026, at 3 pm. Interested bidders can access detailed tender documents through the official Goa government e-procurement portal.

As per the tender conditions, the work is time-bound and must be completed within 365 days, including the monsoon period.

Goa Medical College Expands Online OPD Booking to Eight More Departments

■ Move aims to ease patient access and reduce waiting times

Team Goemkarponn

BAMBOLIM: The Goa government has broadened the online outpatient department (OPD) booking system at Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMC), making appointments available in eight additional departments from Tuesday.

A notification from the Office of the Joint

Secretary (Health) stated that the service, initially piloted for five departments from February 4, will now include Paediatrics, Ophthalmology, Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Neurology, Medical Oncology, Cardiology, Paediatric Cardiology, and Urology.

The system will offer 100 OPD slots per day for each of the newly added departments, except

Neurology and Medical Oncology, which will have 50 slots daily. The public can book appointments through GMC's official website, with services provided according to doctor availability on the chosen date.

The current system does not yet allow patients to select specific doctors.

Officials said the expansion is part of



ongoing efforts to improve patient convenience, cut down waiting times at hospital counters, and promote transparency in the appointment process.

FDA Conducts Surveillance Drive; 4 Units Asked To Suspend Operations

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: A surveillance drive was carried out by the Food and Drugs Administration Goa (FDA) team on February 24, 2026, across Calangute, Arpora, Anjuna and Thivim, inspecting various categories of food businesses including ice manufacturing units, discotheque kitchens, restaurants and cashew retailers.

A total of 14 food business operators were

inspected during the drive, of which four units were directed to suspend operations until compliance with stipulated food safety norms is ensured.

During the inspection at Baga, approximately 150 kilograms of misbranded cashew nuts and mislabelled chocolate analogues were confiscated from a retailer.

In a separate action, one retailer was compounded with a penalty of Rs. 5,000 for stocking and selling expired

confectionery items.

The FDA officials stated that the surveillance drive will continue in other parts of Goa.

Food business operators have been urged to strictly adhere to prescribed safety and labelling norms, failing which their licences are liable to be suspended.

The inspection team comprised Designated Officer Richard Noronha, Food Safety Officers Lenin De Sa and Amit Mandrekar, along with staff member



Sandeep Shelke, working under the guidance of Director Shweta Dessai.

'Keralam' Reflects Our True Identity: Centre Clears Proposal To Rename Kerala

■ Move Seeks To Align Official Name With Malayalam Usage And Ancient Roots

New Delhi: The Union Cabinet has approved a proposal to officially rename Kerala as "Keralam", endorsing the state government's long standing effort to restore the name's original Malayalam form. The change follows two unanimous resolutions passed by the Kerala Legislative Assembly in August 2023 and June 2024, urging an amendment to the First Schedule of the Constitution so that "Keralam" is reflected across all languages listed in the Eighth Schedule.

The resolutions were introduced by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and received support from both the ruling Left Democratic Front and the Congress led United Democratic Front. The state government has described the move as a necessary correction in official records rather than a symbolic gesture.

At the heart of the proposal lies a linguistic argument. In Malayalam,



the state has always been known as "Keralam". Scholars point out that in Dravidian languages, place names often end with the suffix "am", as seen in terms like Tamilakam. Linguistic experts explain that when such words entered English usage, the final consonant was often dropped, leading to simplified forms. In this way, "Keralam" gradually became "Kerala" in English and other languages.

The origins of the name

stretch back to ancient history. Historians link it to the Chera dynasty, which ruled parts of the region. The term "Cheralam", combining "Chera" and "alam" meaning land or region, is believed to have evolved phonetically into "Keralam" over centuries. Further evidence appears in Rock Edict II of Ashoka, where the southern ruler "Keralaputra" is mentioned, marking one of the earliest references to the name.

Support for the

renaming has widened politically. The state unit of the BJP has also backed the proposal, with its president Rajeev Chandrasekhar expressing support to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Chief Minister.

With the Cabinet's approval, the transition to "Keralam" moves closer to formal implementation, underscoring a renewed emphasis on linguistic heritage and historical continuity.



Srinagar To Jammu Vande Bharat Launch Deferred Ahead Of March 1 Rollout

■ Expansion Seen As Key Step Toward Seamless Rail Link For Jammu And Kashmir

New Delhi: The proposed launch of the Vande Bharat Express service between Srinagar and Jammu, scheduled for March 1, has been postponed due to unavoidable circumstances. Railway authorities confirmed that the Railway Board has put the notification programme for the extension on hold until further notice.

Earlier in the day, Northern Railway had formally announced the much anticipated expansion, marking what was described as a significant development in improving rail connectivity within Jammu and Kashmir. The move aimed to directly link Srinagar with Jammu, connecting the two capital cities of the Union Territory and addressing long standing public demand for smoother travel between the regions.

The extension was also viewed as an important milestone in strengthening Kashmir's rail integration with the rest of the country. The Srinagar to Katra Vande Bharat service was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June last year, marking a historic step in expanding

modern rail infrastructure in the Valley.

As part of the planned upgrade, the Railways had announced an increase in the number of coaches on the Vande Bharat train operating between Katra and Srinagar, expanding capacity from eight to 20 coaches. The existing service has gained popularity across Jammu and Kashmir but has struggled to manage rising passenger demand due to limited capacity and frequency.

Currently, regular rail services extend only up to Katra. Passengers travelling to or from Srinagar must change trains at the station, a process that adds time and inconvenience. Although the proposed extension to Jammu would not eliminate the need for transshipment, it was considered a crucial step toward eventually establishing a direct rail connection between Srinagar and major cities such as Delhi.

Despite the temporary setback, the expansion remains a significant component of broader efforts to enhance rail connectivity in the region.

...CONTD FROM PAGE 01

MLA Viresh Rejects Abeyance Offer, Insists On Scrapping 39A Conversions

The agitation intensified on Monday when several hundred protesters marched to the private residence of TCP Minister Vishwajit Rane at Dona Paula. Following the demonstration, the Chief Minister appealed to agitators not to disrupt public order and instead submit their concerns formally to the government.

Opposition Must Unite Over Borkar Manhandling: Alemaao

any circumstances. He stressed that Borkar had visited the site to represent and protect the interests of his constituents, and any action against him in that capacity raises serious concerns.

Officers Must Maintain Decorum First: Borkar

raised multiple concerns related to Section 39A, other pending legislative matters, and the alleged manhandling incident that took place during the recent protest at the TCP office.

The MLA stated that when he and others visited the TCP office to seek clarifications, they were assured that their queries would be addressed. However, he alleged that the concerned officers left the premises without

providing any written responses or formally communicating their position.

According to Borkar, such conduct did not reflect proper administrative decorum. Reacting to allegations that protesters had failed to maintain discipline during the visit, he maintained that officials should first ensure that they themselves follow due procedure and respect established norms.

The Leader of Opposition added that his stand would have remained the same even if a legislator from the ruling party had faced similar treatment, underscoring that the issue goes beyond party lines.

Vijai Flags Break from Assembly Convention Over Budget Timing

Thursday. Sardesai pointed out that Fridays are traditionally earmarked for Private Members' Business, allowing legislators to introduce and discuss their own resolutions and bills. He said beginning the session with the Budget presentation on the same day effectively curtailed the opportunity for MLAs to take up their Private Members' matters. Describing such conventions as integral to the smooth functioning of the Assembly, Sardesai stressed that established parliamentary practices should be respected to ensure fairness and adequate participation for all members.

Time-Bound Replies Assured On TCP Issues, Says Borkar After BAC Meet

Borkar said, underlining that adherence to timelines is essential for legislative accountability. The MLA clarified that he attended the BAC meeting in his role as the representative of the Revolutionary Goans Party (RGP). He added that his hunger strike was not discussed during the meeting and that he did not bring it up either. However, Borkar

maintained that the alleged manhandling incident involving him still requires resolution. Responding to criticism that the RGP has failed to maintain decorum during the agitation, he said officials must first ensure that proper procedure and decorum are followed on their part, especially when responding to elected representatives within the mandated timeframe.

India and Israel Launch First Round of Free Trade Agreement Talks

■ Negotiations begin in New Delhi as leaders seek to deepen economic partnership

New Delhi: India and Israel have formally launched the first round of negotiations for a proposed Free Trade Agreement, marking a significant step in strengthening their economic partnership. The discussions began in New Delhi on 23 February 2026 and will continue until 26 February 2026, setting the stage for a structured dialogue on expanding bilateral trade and investment ties. The groundwork for these negotiations was laid in November 2025 with the signing of the Terms of Reference, which established a clear framework for engagement across identified sectors. The agreement aims to provide greater predictability and stability for businesses in



both countries, including micro, small and medium enterprises. In the financial year 2024 to 2025, total merchandise trade between the two nations stood at 3.62 billion US dollars, highlighting the scope for further expansion.

Technical experts from both sides are participating in detailed sessions covering trade in goods and services, rules of origin, sanitary and phytosanitary measures,

technical barriers to trade, customs procedures, trade facilitation, and intellectual property rights. These discussions are intended to build a comprehensive and balanced framework that reflects the evolving nature of the partnership.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal noted that the negotiations coincide with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel, calling it a timely moment to advance economic cooperation. He

highlighted opportunities in innovation, science and technology, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, high technology manufacturing, agriculture and services as key areas of mutual strength.

India's chief negotiator Ajay Bhadoo stressed the importance of crafting a forward looking and balanced agreement. His Israeli counterpart, Yifat Alon Perel, emphasised that closer economic integration could strengthen supply chains and open new markets for both countries. The launch of FTA talks underscores the strategic depth of India Israel relations and reflects a shared commitment to building a resilient and mutually beneficial economic partnership.



“Visit Will Set New Goals for Strategic Partnership”: PM Modi Heads to Israel

■ Second trip since 2017 aims to deepen cooperation in defence, technology, and innovation

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi departed for a two day visit to Israel, describing the trip as an opportunity to chart new milestones in the India Israel Strategic Partnership. He said the visit would focus on strengthening cooperation across key sectors while reviewing regional and global developments of shared concern. This marks his second visit to Israel, following

his landmark 2017 trip that expanded collaboration in defence, agriculture and water management. Over the years, bilateral ties have evolved into a robust and multifaceted partnership marked by growing engagement in innovation and technology driven sectors. During the visit, Modi will hold wide ranging talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

“As Soon As There’s More Clarity”: Piyush Goyal on Resuming India US Trade Talks

■ Minister says negotiations will restart once tariff situation in the United States becomes clearer

New Delhi: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has indicated that India will resume trade negotiations with the United States once there is greater clarity on tariff related developments in Washington. He stated that discussions would move forward as soon as the situation on the tariff front becomes clearer. India and the United States had earlier decided to reschedule a planned meeting between their chief negotiators that was set to take place in Washington to finalise the text of an interim trade agreement. The Indian delegation was originally scheduled to begin a three day round of talks on February 23, but the meeting has now been deferred. Addressing questions on foreign investment policy, Goyal also spoke about the government's approach to Press Note 3, which mandates prior approval for investments from countries sharing land borders with India, including China. The measure was introduced



during the pandemic to prevent opportunistic takeovers of Indian firms at a time when valuations were under pressure. The minister said the government is engaging with domestic industry stakeholders to better understand their concerns and assess whether adjustments are needed in light of changing economic conditions. He emphasised that while safeguards remain important, the administration remains open to evolving its policies in response to new realities. Goyal noted that investments from China are not prohibited but are subject to an approval process. He suggested that reforms could involve a calibrated and step by step approach, aimed at speeding up clearances while maintaining oversight.

“Several Non Compliances Observed”: DGCA Grounds Four VSR Aircraft After Fatal Crash

■ Safety audit ordered following Baramati Learjet tragedy that killed Ajit Pawar and four others

New Delhi: A month after a plane crash near Baramati claimed the life of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and four others, aviation authorities have grounded four aircraft operated by VSR Ventures Pvt Ltd. The action follows a special safety audit conducted by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation in the aftermath of the accident. The regulator reported multiple deviations from approved procedures

within the company's operations. The audit identified shortcomings in airworthiness standards, flight safety oversight, and operational practices. Citing gaps in maintenance processes and procedural compliance, the DGCA directed immediate corrective measures. As part of the order, four Learjet 40 and 45 aircraft bearing registrations VT VRA, VT VRS, VT VRV and VT TRI have been

grounded until required airworthiness standards are fully restored. The regulator has also issued deficiency reporting forms to the operator, seeking a detailed root cause analysis of the lapses identified during the inspection. Further regulatory review will follow based on the company's response. The crash occurred on 28 January when a Learjet 45, registered as VT SSK, went down while



attempting to land near the Baramati airstrip. The aircraft had departed from Mumbai and was carrying five people, including Pawar and security personnel. The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau is leading the technical probe into the incident. Investigators confirmed that both the digital flight data recorder and cockpit voice recorder were exposed to severe heat and fire damage.

“No Projects, But a Name Change?": Shashi Tharoor Questions Move to Rename Kerala

■ Congress leader raises concerns as Centre clears proposal to officially adopt ‘Keralam’

New Delhi: Congress MP Shashi Tharoor has criticised the Union government's decision to approve the renaming of Kerala to “Keralam,” arguing that symbolic changes are being prioritised over developmental needs. He pointed out that the state has long been referred to

as Keralam in Malayalam, questioning what practical difference the change would make in English usage. Tharoor remarked that while the Centre had cleared the proposal to alter the state's name, it had not sanctioned major projects or new institutions for Kerala. He cited the

absence of an AIIMS and what he described as a lack of significant allocations in the Union Budget. According to him, the focus on renaming stands in contrast to pending demands related to infrastructure and development. In a separate social media post, Tharoor also raised



a linguistic query about how residents of the state would be referred to if the name officially becomes Keralam. He suggested that commonly used terms such as Keralite and Keralan may not seamlessly adapt to the revised nomenclature, adding a note of satire to his remarks.

“I’m Glad It Happened Early”: Ravi Shastri’s Blunt Take After India’s Heavy Loss

■ Former coach backs shake up in playing XI as defending champions face must win clash

New Delhi: Former India head coach Ravi Shastri delivered a candid assessment after India’s crushing 76 run defeat to South Africa national cricket team in the Super 8 stage of the ICC T20 World Cup 2026. The loss in Ahmedabad left the India national cricket team with a steep path to the semifinals, but Shastri said he was relieved the setback came early rather than at the decisive stage of the tournament.

Reflecting on the defeat, Shastri suggested the result could serve as a timely wake up call for the Suryakumar Yadav led side. He noted that facing adversity at this stage might prompt a reassessment of strategy



and team combination. According to him, the experience should ensure the players do not take upcoming matches lightly, especially in a phase where another slip could pile on immense pressure.

Selection decisions have also come under scrutiny, particularly the omission of Axar Patel against South Africa. His

replacement, Washington Sundar, struggled to make an impact. Shastri advocated bringing Axar back for the next fixture and even suggested fielding both all rounders to provide greater bowling depth. He pointed out that relying on limited options can prove costly if a frontline bowler has an off day.

He added that including both players would strengthen the lower order, with options such as Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dube adding batting depth. However, such a move could mean a tough call on Rinku Singh, depending on the balance the team management seeks.

India now face Zimbabwe national cricket team in a crucial Super 8 encounter. With their net run rate taking a severe hit after the loss, a convincing victory is essential. Addressing instability at the top of the order and consolidating the number three position will be key if the defending champions are to revive their campaign.

D Gukesh Seeks Strong Comeback at Prague International Chess Festival

World champion leads Indian contingent in competitive Masters field

New Delhi: Reigning world champion D Gukesh will look to secure his first major success of the year when he headlines India’s campaign at the Prague International Chess Festival in the Czech Republic, beginning Wednesday. After an early exit at the World Cup and a subdued showing at the Tata Steel Masters, Gukesh will aim to regain momentum in a high quality Masters field.

Seeded second, the 10th ranked player in the live world ratings enters the tournament as India’s highest rated Grandmaster. He faces stiff competition from top seed Vincent Keymer, who currently sits fourth in the live rankings, and Uzbekistan’s in form Nodirbek Abdusattorov,



fresh off his maiden Tata Steel Masters title. Both rivals have enjoyed stronger recent results, adding further intrigue to the nine round Masters event. India’s representation also includes defending champion Aravindh Chithambaram, who earned his breakthrough title at this very tournament. Seeded seventh this year, Chithambaram will be keen to rediscover form after a below par Tata Steel campaign and re enter the elite 2700 rating bracket.

Indian Golf Premier League Draws 100 Million Dollar Franchise Backing Across 10 Cities

■ Landmark investment signals ambitious plan to expand golf infrastructure in India and overseas

New Delhi: The Indian Golf Premier League has secured a landmark 100 million dollar commitment from ten franchise partners, marking the largest private investment in the history of the sport in India. Each franchise has pledged approximately 10 million dollars over a ten year period, underlining a long term strategy to professionalise and widen access to golf across the country.

Franchise rights have been awarded across Hyderabad, Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi, Chennai, Visakhapatnam, Goa, Bengaluru, Punjab and Gurugram, ensuring representation from major metropolitan centres as well as emerging markets. The ten city structure is designed to broaden the sport’s footprint and bring competitive golf closer to new audiences.

Beyond league operations, the franchise partners have collectively committed 250 million dollars



towards infrastructure development. Plans include compact courses spread over eight to ten acres in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities and rural regions, aimed at breaking golf’s traditional elite barrier and making it more accessible.

Chief Executive Officer Uttam Singh Mundy described the league as a long term platform that blends sport with business expansion and national development. He emphasised that the backing from diverse sectors such as pharmaceuticals, infrastructure, real estate and venture capital reflects strong confidence in the league’s vision. According to him, the IGPL is not just building a competition but creating a full ecosystem that connects grassroots initiatives with global tournaments.

“Very Reassured, Everything’s Good”: FIFA Chief Backs Mexico’s World Cup Readiness

■ Gianni Infantino dismisses security concerns after cartel violence shakes Guadalajara

New Delhi: FIFA President Gianni Infantino has expressed confidence in Mexico’s ability to host matches at the upcoming 2026 FIFA World Cup, despite recent violence linked to the killing of a major drug cartel leader. Speaking in Barranquilla, Colombia, Infantino said he was reassured about preparations and described the tournament as set to be spectacular.

His remarks came days after intense clashes erupted following the death of Nemesio

Oseguera, widely known as El Mencho, the leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel. The unrest was particularly severe in Guadalajara, one of Mexico’s designated host cities. Authorities reported that at least 74 people were killed during the operation to capture Oseguera and in subsequent confrontations between security forces and suspected cartel members. Gunmen reportedly blocked roads across multiple states and set vehicles

and businesses ablaze, prompting scenes of panic.

Mexico is co hosting 0 the tournament alongside the United States and Canada, with matches scheduled between June 11 and July 19. Guadalajara is set to stage four group stage fixtures, including a high profile clash between Uruguay national football team and Spain national football team, and will also co host a playoff tournament with Monterrey to determine



the final qualifying teams. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum assured that there is no risk to fans and said normalcy is gradually returning. Jalisco Governor Pablo Lemus similarly ruled out any possibility of Guadalajara being removed from the host list.

Lakshya Sen Draws Top Seed Shi Yu Qi, Sindhu to Face Supanida at All England Open 2026

■ Indian shuttlers handed challenging opening round matches in Birmingham

New Delhi: India’s leading badminton stars are set for demanding opening round encounters at the All England Open 2026, with Lakshya Sen and P V Sindhu drawing formidable opponents in their respective singles events.

In men’s singles, Lakshya faces

a stern test against top seed Shi Yu Qi in the Round of 32. The clash promises to be one of the standout matches of the opening phase, given the Chinese star’s consistency at the highest level. Meanwhile, Ayush Shetty will take on Indonesia’s Alwi Farhan as he looks to make a mark in the prestigious tournament.

