



Ponda Bypoll Heats Up as Congress, BJP Move to Finalise Candidates

■ Ruling party to decide nominee in Delhi meet; Congress backs Ketan Bhatikar for April 9 contest



Team Goemkarponn

PONDA: Political activity in Ponda has gathered momentum following the Election Commission's announcement of the Assembly by-election schedule, with both the BJP and Congress accelerating efforts to

finalise their candidates for the crucial seat. The by-election, slated for April 9, was necessitated after the demise of former minister Ravi Naik on October 15, 2025. The nomination process is already underway, with March 23 set as the last date for

Ponda Bypolls...

- ▶ April 9 bypoll set to test strength of both BJP and Congress.
- ▶ Election triggered following the demise of Ravi Naik.
- ▶ March 23 is the last date for filing nomination papers.
- ▶ BJP high command in Delhi to finalise candidate.
- ▶ Ticket race between Ritesh Naik and Vishwanath Dalvi
- ▶ Final decision to be taken by BJP Parliamentary Board
- ▶ Ketan Bhatikar emerges as Congress' sole applicant
- ▶ Gains consensus within state unit, cleared by GPCC
- ▶ Awaiting final nod from central leadership
- ▶ Eyes redemption after narrow loss in 2022 Assembly polls

filing papers. The BJP is expected to take a final

call on its candidate **CONTD TO PAGE 06...**

No Proposal for Dual Citizenship for Goan NRIs, Says State Government

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: The Goa government has clarified that it has not made any representation to the Union Government regarding the grant of dual citizenship to Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), including members of the Goan diaspora. In a reply to a starred Legislative Assembly question tabled by MLA Viresh Borkar, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who also holds the Home portfolio, stated that dual citizenship is not permissible under Article 9 of the Constitution of India. He further emphasized that citizenship is a Central subject and is uniformly



laagu across the country, with no special provisions for any state. The government also informed that no specific study or consultations have been conducted by the Department of NRI Affairs on the demand for dual citizenship. Additionally, no memorandums have been received from overseas Goan associations on the issue.



Governor Pusapati Ashok Gajapathi Raju and Chief Minister Dr. Pramod Sawant paid heartfelt tributes to former Defence Minister and ex-Goa CM Manohar Parrikar on his death anniversary at Smriti Sthal, Miramar.

400 Killed, Around 250 Injured In Pak Airstrike On Kabul Hospital: Taliban

■ Afghan authorities accuse Pakistan of bombing drug rehabilitation facility as Islamabad denies targeting any hospital

New Delhi: A massive airstrike in Afghanistan's capital Kabul has triggered sharp tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan after Afghan authorities claimed that hundreds of people were killed when a hospital was struck late Monday night. Afghan officials said the attack hit a large drug rehabilitation hospital in Kabul at around 9 pm

local time. The strike reportedly caused severe destruction to the facility, which has a capacity of around 2,000 beds. Authorities said the blast destroyed significant portions of the building and left a large number of patients and staff trapped under debris. According to Afghan government statements, at least 400 people lost their lives in

the attack while about 250 others sustained injuries. Many of the victims were patients receiving treatment for drug addiction at the facility. Rescue efforts continued through the night as emergency teams worked to recover bodies and assist the wounded. Afghan leaders strongly condemned the incident, accusing Pakistan of



deliberately targeting civilian infrastructure. Officials said the strike represented a serious violation of Afghan airspace and described the incident as a grave humanitarian tragedy. They also argued that striking a medical facility treating vulnerable patients breached fundamental international principles.

Nearly 2,000 Matka Cases Registered in 3 Years; Govt Says Crackdown Ongoing

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: The Goa government has acknowledged that illegal matka gambling continues to operate in the state, with authorities carrying out regular enforcement actions to curb the activity. In a written reply to an unstarred Legislative Assembly question tabled by MLA Venzy Viegas, Chief Minister and Home Minister Dr. Pramod Sawant stated that police conduct frequent raids and register cases under relevant laws whenever such illegal activities are detected. Data shared by the government revealed that a total of 1,975 matka-related cases have been



registered across various police stations in the last three years. This includes 629 cases in 2023, 752 in 2024, and 594 cases in 2025. Addressing concerns over enforcement, the government maintained that police personnel carry out regular day and night patrolling and gather intelligence through sources to track illegal matka operations.

"They Will Blow Up The Entire Middle East": Trump Warns Against Iran Getting Nuclear Weapons

■ US President claims American strikes weakened Iran's military and leadership amid rising regional tensions

New Delhi: US President Donald Trump issued a strong warning against Iran acquiring nuclear weapons, saying such a development could destabilise the region and trigger devastating consequences across the Middle East. Speaking about recent military actions, Trump defended the operations and argued that preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons remains critical



for global security. He claimed that if Tehran were to obtain such weapons, it would use them immediately and could trigger large scale destruction across the

region. Trump said the leadership in Iran posed a serious threat and described them as violent and dangerous. He alleged that thousands of protesters had been killed during recent unrest in the country and insisted that allowing Iran to possess nuclear weapons would be unacceptable. The US President also claimed that American military operations in recent weeks had

severely weakened Iran's defence capabilities. According to him, the strikes significantly damaged Iran's naval and air power and dismantled key elements of its leadership structure. Trump asserted that the operations had destroyed much of Iran's missile and drone infrastructure and disrupted multiple layers of command within the country's military

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United in Rhetoric, Divided in Reality: Goa Opposition's Familiar Collapse

The latest disruption in the Goa Assembly, culminating in the marshalling out of six Opposition MLAs while one chose to remain seated, has once again laid bare a persistent and uncomfortable truth: the Opposition in Goa continues to be its own weakest link.

At the centre of this episode is Vijai Sardesai, whose decision to stay back in the House while his colleagues were evicted has triggered a fresh round of accusations and counter-accusations. Leader of Opposition Yuri Alemao did not mince words, hinting at the presence of a "mole" within Opposition ranks. Similar criticism came from Viresh Borkar and Venzy Viegas, each questioning Sardesai's intent and commitment.

But beyond personalities and immediate political theatre, this moment reflects a deeper malaise. Goa's Opposition, despite repeated calls for unity, has consistently failed to act as a cohesive force. The issue is not merely ideological divergence. It is a pattern of mistrust, tactical one-upmanship, and an inability to prioritise collective strategy over individual positioning. The timing of this latest fracture could not be more significant. With elections less than a year away, the expectation among voters is for an Opposition that can offer a credible alternative to the ruling party. Instead, what they see is fragmentation playing out in full public view. The optics are damaging. When Opposition members cannot even agree on how to protest inside the Assembly, it raises serious questions about their ability to govern together. The immediate trigger for Monday's chaos was the debate over the Goa Appropriation Bill and the enforcement of the model code of conduct for the Ponda bypoll. These are not trivial matters. They go to the heart of governance, financial accountability, and electoral fairness. Yet, the Opposition's intervention, instead of strengthening scrutiny, ended up overshadowed by internal discord.

Sardesai's decision to distance himself from the

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protest may have been tactical or principled, depending on one's perspective. However, politics is as much about perception as it is about intent. In choosing not to stand with his colleagues at a moment of confrontation, he has reinforced the narrative that the Opposition lacks a united front. Whether or not this perception is fair, it is now firmly embedded in public discourse. This is not the first time such divisions have surfaced. Goa's political landscape has long been marked by shifting alliances and fragile partnerships. Smaller parties often wield disproportionate influence, but that influence is rarely channelled into building

durable coalitions. Instead, it is used to carve out distinct political identities, even at the cost of weakening the broader Opposition space.

The ruling party, unsurprisingly, benefits from this disarray. A divided Opposition makes for easier legislative management and blunts the impact of dissent. More importantly, it shapes voter psychology. When the alternative appears fractured, the status quo begins to seem like the safer choice, regardless of its shortcomings. What is particularly striking is that this pattern is not unique to Goa. Across the country, Opposition parties frequently struggle to bridge differences and present a unified challenge. Yet, in a small state like Goa, where the number of players is limited and political stakes are intensely local, the cost of division is even more pronounced.

If the Opposition hopes to remain relevant, it must move beyond rhetorical calls for unity. That requires hard political work: building trust, agreeing on common minimum programmes, and establishing mechanisms to resolve disagreements internally rather than in the public arena. It also requires a degree of political maturity, where leaders are willing to subordinate personal ambitions to collective goals. The events in the Assembly should serve as a wake-up call. Voters are not merely looking for voices of protest; they are looking for coherence, consistency, and credibility. Without these, even the most legitimate criticisms of the government risk losing their impact.

In the months leading up to the next election, the Opposition in Goa faces a clear choice. It can continue along its current path, marked by episodic unity and frequent fractures, or it can attempt the far more difficult task of forging a genuine alliance. The former guarantees more of the same. The latter, while uncertain, at least offers the possibility of change.

For now, Monday's episode stands as a reminder that the biggest challenge before Goa's Opposition is not the ruling party. It is itself.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A Tragedy That Demands Answers and Compassion

The tragic death of a social worker and his young son in Bicholim is not just another headline. It is a deeply disturbing incident that raises urgent questions about mental health, social pressures, and the support systems available within our communities. According to reports, the bodies of Sanjay Mhapsekar and his son were found inside their home by a family member, with a handwritten note recovered from the scene, and investigations are still underway to determine the exact cause of death. The circumstances, including the presence of injuries and the uncertainty surrounding the note, only deepen the sense of unease. What stands out is that Mhapsekar was known as an active social worker. When individuals who are engaged with society and presumably connected to people around them face such a tragic end, it forces us to confront an uncomfortable reality. Emotional distress and personal struggles often remain hidden, even in those who appear outwardly strong and socially involved. This incident must prompt more than a routine police investigation. It should lead to a broader conversation about mental health awareness in Goa. Families, local communities, and institutions need to be better equipped to identify warning signs and offer timely help. Access to counselling and crisis support cannot remain limited or stigmatised. At the same time, authorities must ensure a thorough and transparent probe so that speculation does not replace facts. The truth behind such tragedies matters, not only for justice but also for public confidence. Above all, this is a moment for reflection. Behind every such incident is a story of distress that went unheard. Goa must do better in listening before it is too late.

-Seby D'Souza, Thivim

Quiet Consistency Deserves Recognition

It is often said that in politics, visibility matters as much as performance. Yet, there are individuals who quietly challenge that belief through consistent grassroots work. In the functioning of the Corporation of the City of Panaji, Diksha Mainkar is one such example. Winning five consecutive terms from the Boca De Vaca ward is no ordinary feat. It reflects a sustained bond of trust with the electorate. What makes it more noteworthy is the understated manner in which it has been achieved. There has been no noise or attempt to dominate headlines, only steady and focused work. Behind this success is the equally committed Devanand Mainkar, whose dedication is well recognised. Many still recall how former Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar would react, often half-jokingly, on seeing him approach with a stack of files. It was a telling sign of the seriousness with which public issues were pursued. Over the years, several councillors have occupied the limelight. While visibility has its place, it should not overshadow consistent performance on the ground. Leaders like the Mainkars have continued to deliver without fanfare, election after election. In a political culture that often rewards optics, it becomes important for party leadership to recognise quiet efficiency. Consistency, commitment and results must carry weight in decision-making. As the Corporation looks ahead, one hopes that such sustained work is acknowledged and rewarded with roles that reflect merit and dedication.

-Sandeep Heble, Panjim

Goa Earns Over Rs 1,749 Crore From Casino Industry In Five Years

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: The state government has generated more than ₹1,749 crore in revenue from the casino sector over the past five years through licence fees and other charges under the Goa Public Gambling Act, 1976. Providing details in the Legislative Assembly on Monday, Chief Minister



Pramod Sawant, who also holds the Home portfolio, stated that the government collected ₹1,749,32,43,907 from

casino operations between April 2021 and February 2026. The figures show a steady rise in revenue following the pandemic

years. Collections from casino licence holders were ₹186.35 crore in 2021-22 and increased to ₹353.78 crore in 2022-23. The revenue reached its highest level of ₹603.76 crore in 2023-24 before declining to ₹461.71 crore in 2024-25. In the ongoing financial year 2025-26, the government has so far received ₹143.70 crore up to February 28.

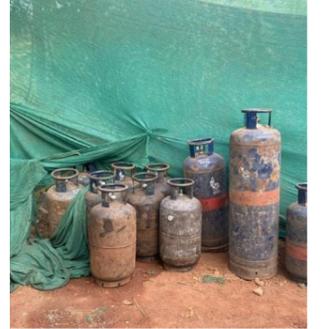
38 Commercial LPG Cylinders Seized In Sangolda, Probe Launched

Team Goemkarponn

Sangolda: Officials from the Civil Supplies Department in Bardez seized 38 commercial LPG cylinders that were allegedly being stored illegally at a secluded location in Sangolda on Monday evening.

The action was part of a statewide drive launched by the department to curb black marketing of LPG cylinders. Authorities had directed taluka-level officers across Goa to remain alert and closely monitor stocks held by LPG distributors, with inspections being carried out regularly.

The operation was conducted under the supervision of Assistant Director of the Civil Supplies Department, Deepa Fulari. The team included Bardez Division Inspector Rajiv Sawant, Sub-Inspector Sarvesh Naik Tuyekar, along



with officials Vasudev Shirodkar, Rohit Talankar, Sadashiv Khandeparkar and Sub-Inspector Jeevan Palyekar.

During the inspection in Sangolda, the officials spotted an LPG supply vehicle parked at an isolated spot. When the team questioned the driver and a worker present at the site regarding the cylinders, both individuals reportedly fled from the location. A search of the vehicle and surrounding area led to the discovery of 38 commercial LPG cylinders, including 18 sealed cylinders and 20 that were unsealed.

Father And Son Found Dead At Bicholim Home, Police Probe Underway

Team Goemkarponn

Bicholim: Shock and grief spread in Bicholim after a well-known social worker and his son were discovered dead inside their residence at Naiknagar-Borde on Monday evening. The deceased have been identified as social activist



Sanjay Mhapsekar

and his son Sanchit Mhapsekar. Their bodies were found inside the same room of the house, prompting police to launch an investigation that continued late into the night. According to initial information, Sanjay Mhapsekar was found lying on the floor, while his son Sanchit was

discovered motionless on a cot in the room. The incident came to light when Sanjay's daughter returned home from work and found both of them unresponsive. Alarmed by the scene, she immediately contacted her maternal uncle and informed him about the situation.

Mapusa Court Hears Plea To Tag Proclamation Proceedings With Birch By Romeo Lane Fire Case

Team Goemkarponn

Mapusa: The counsel representing property owner Surinder Kumar Khosla on Monday filed an application before the Mapusa court requesting that the proclamation proceedings against his client be linked with the Birch by Romeo Lane fire case. Police from Anjuna have already submitted a chargesheet in the fire incident, naming 13 accused, including Khosla, who owns the property where the Birch by Romeo Lane club operated. During the hearing, Khosla's lawyer, Sebastian Vales, urged the court to club the proclamation matter with the chargesheet case, arguing that both issues are closely connected and are being handled by the same court. He requested that the court consider hearing the chargesheet proceedings alongside the criminal



revision application that challenges the proclamation notice issued to his client. After hearing the submission, the court directed the prosecution to submit its response to the application and adjourned the matter to April 7. Speaking to the media later, Vales said the proclamation proceedings and the case arising from the police chargesheet are interrelated, making it appropriate for both matters to be heard together. He also informed that additional time has been sought to file a rejoinder addressing the contents of the police submission.

Congress Alleges Illegal Curtailment of Assembly Session, Questions Rs 677 Crore Event Spending

■ Sunil Kawthankar says govt avoided key discussions, vows to expose expenditure on events.

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: Congress leader Sunil Kawthankar has accused the Goa government of illegally curtailing the ongoing Assembly session, claiming it has deprived the people of the state of meaningful discussions on crucial issues,



including Section 39A.

Kawthankar alleged that the government cited the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) as the reason for cutting the session short, but questioned the justification by pointing out that legislative sessions are continuing in Maharashtra despite by-elections being underway. He further claimed that the

manner in which the state Budget was passed raises serious concerns, terming it an "illegal procedure" and an attempt to bypass proper legislative scrutiny. In a separate allegation, Kawthankar stated that the Goa government has spent a staggering ₹677 crore on events since 2022.

349 GST Appeals Pending Before SGST Authorities In Goa, No Tax Dues Outstanding

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: The state's commercial tax department has reported that 349 appeals related to Goods and Services Tax (GST) are currently pending before the appellate authorities of State GST (SGST) in Goa. However, the finance department has clarified that there are no outstanding tax dues despite these pending



cases. Chief minister Pramod Sawant explained that under the GST system, taxpayers are required to clear their tax

liabilities, including interest and late fees, before submitting their returns through Form GSTR-3B. He said the online portal does not allow the filing of returns unless all dues are paid, which ensures that no arrears remain pending. Sharing revenue figures, Sawant stated that the state collected ₹3,536 crore in GST during the financial year 2022-23. The collections increased to ₹4,059 crore

in 2023-24 and further rose to ₹4,424 crore in 2024-25. For the current financial year 2025-26, provisional data shows GST revenue of ₹3,694 crore up to January. The chief minister disclosed the information while replying to a question in the state assembly seeking details about GST arrears and steps taken by the government to strengthen tax revenue.

Worker Dies After Coconut Tree Uproots In Consua

■ 22-year-old hired to pluck coconuts succumbs to injuries at GMC Bambolim

Team Goemkarponn

Consua: A 22-year-old worker died after a coconut tree reportedly uprooted while he was plucking coconuts at Consua. According to Goa Police, a wireless message was received from Goa Medical College and Hospital on March 15 stating that Nawin Soreng (22), a resident of Benaulim and a native of Jharkhand, had died while undergoing treatment. Enquiries revealed that Soreng had been hired to pluck coconuts in a property at Consua. While he had climbed



the coconut tree to pluck coconuts, the tree suddenly bent and uprooted from the ground, causing him to fall and sustain serious injuries. He was initially shifted to South Goa District Hospital for treatment and later referred to GMC Bambolim, where

he succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment in the casualty ward. The body has been preserved at GMC Bambolim for medico-legal formalities. Further investigation is being carried out by PSI Carey Fernandes of Verna Police Station.

Abandoned German Shepherd Case Reported To Colva Police

■ Complaint filed by DSPCA South Goa after dog allegedly left on streets for six months

Team Goemkarponn

Colva: A case of alleged abandonment of a pet dog has been reported in Colva after a German Shepherd was found living on the streets for nearly six months. According to local residents, the dog had been roaming in the area without proper care or supervision from its owner. During this period, locals stepped forward to provide food and basic care to ensure the animal's survival. Residents recently raised concerns when the alleged owner returned to the area after



months, prompting them to approach authorities regarding the prolonged abandonment of the pet. Acting on the complaint

from locals, DSPCA South Goa officer Amol Satoskar along with Raj Pratik formally filed a complaint at Colva Police Station seeking necessary action in the matter. The complaint highlights alleged neglect and abandonment of the dog and calls for an inquiry under relevant provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960. DSPCA South Goa has reiterated that abandonment of pets is a serious act of cruelty and has urged pet owners to act responsibly and ensure proper care and protection of their animals.



Man Caught Accepting Gambling Bets In Dona Paula

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: Police caught a 59-year-old man allegedly accepting gambling bets from the public at Aivao in Dona Paula on Sunday afternoon.

According to police, the accused, Vishnu Gawas (59), a resident of Aivao, was caught red-handed around 1:55 pm on March 16 near Lok Priya Bar while accepting money

bets on numerical digital numbers as a game of chance in an open public place.

During the operation, police seized cash amounting to ₹1,160 in different denominations along with other gambling-related articles from his possession. The accused has been booked by Goa Police, and further investigation into the case is in progress.

Unidentified Foreign National Found In Morjim Dies During Treatment

Team Goemkarponn

Pernem: An unidentified foreign national, aged around 40 years, who was found lying unconscious in Morjim, died while undergoing treatment at Goa Medical College and Hospital.

According to police, a wireless message was



received on March 12 from GMC Bambolim stating that the man, who had been admitted to

Ward No. 100 as a "found lying" case, expired during treatment.

Enquiries revealed that at around 4 am on the same day, a local resident passing by noticed the man lying outside Family Tree Restaurant and alerted the 108 ambulance service.

The man was initially

shifted to Community Health Centre Tuem for treatment and was later referred to GMC Bambolim, where he succumbed while undergoing treatment.

Police said no foul play is suspected in the case so far, and further investigation is in progress.

Man Found Dead In Honda, Body Sent To GMC Morgue

Team Goemkarponn

Sattari: A man was found dead at Chodankar Wada in Honda late Sunday night, police said. According to Goa Police, a phone call was received

from the 108 ambulance service at around 11:03 pm on March 15 informing that a person was lying at Chodankar Wada in Honda, Sattari. Police rushed to the spot and conducted enquiries,

during which the deceased was identified as Munna, who was residing in a rented room at the house of Dashrath Kauthankar at Chodankar Nagar, Honda. The deceased is reportedly a

native of Odisha, though his full details are yet to be confirmed.

The body has been sent for preservation at the morgue of Goa Medical College and Hospital.



Case Registered Over Bullfight In Benaulim

Team Goemkarponn

Colva: Goa Police have registered a case after a video circulating on social media allegedly showed a bullfight being organised in Benaulim. According to police, the case was registered at Colva Police Station based on a state complaint filed by PSI Prathamesh Mahale.



The complaint states that on March 14, 2026, unknown persons

allegedly organised a bullfight between two bulls in an open place at Benaulim, within the jurisdiction of Colva Police Station, for the entertainment of the public. The accused persons reportedly incited the bulls to fight with each other in public view, thereby subjecting the animals to cruelty.

Man Booked For Assault Over Property Dispute In Morjim

Team Goemkarponn

Pernem: Goa Police have registered a case of assault following a property dispute at Morjim in Pernem taluka. According to police, the offence was registered at Mandrem Police

Station based on a complaint filed by Govind Shetgaonkar (43), a resident of Mardi Wada, Morjim.

The complaint states that on March 15 at around 11 am at New Wada, Morjim, at a property known

as "Sakharibhatlem" bearing Survey No. 187/21 of Morjim village, the accused Ramnath Pandurang Shetgaonkar allegedly assaulted the complainant's cousin, Pandurang Shetgaonkar, by hitting him on the head with a stone.

Drishti Lifesavers Rescue Five, Assist Five During Weekend Across Goa

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: Lifesavers of Drishti Marine rescued five persons from drowning and provided first aid to five beachgoers during the weekend at several beaches and at Dudhsagar Falls. At Ashwem Beach, a 29-year-old tourist from Bengaluru was rescued after being caught in deep waters about 50 metres from the shore. Lifesavers Rupesh Kerkar and Nagesh Sarang brought



him safely back using a rescue tube and rescue board. At Baga Beach, an 18-year-old tourist from Gujarat was rescued after being caught in a flash rip current while swimming. Lifesavers Shubham Naik and Ramashish Rajbhar carried out the rescue

operation. At Candolim Beach, a 17-year-old tourist from Belgaum who panicked while swimming was rescued by lifesavers Saifhul Baidya and Rohit Kandolna. In another incident, a 67-year-old tourist from the United Kingdom experienced dizziness and breathing discomfort while resting on a beach bed and was assisted before being taken for medical care. A third incident involved a 42-year-old woman from Delhi who

sustained an ankle injury after coming in contact with a passenger boat in the water sports area. Lifesavers led by Captain Divakar Desai administered first aid and shifted her to the Candolim Primary Health Centre. At Utorda Beach, a woman from Varca who had lost her gold mangalsutra was helped by on-duty lifesaver Chandrashekar, who later recovered and returned the ornament after following protocol.

BJP's Arrogance of Power Reflected in Dadagiri: LoP Yuri Alemao

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: Leader of Opposition Yuri Alemao on Monday said that the decision to pass the budget without a 'Vote on Account' is a glaring example of the Dadagiri the BJP has imbibed through sheer arrogance of power. "This act is not only an insult to the people of Goa but also a blatant assault on democracy," he said. "Since coming to power, the BJP has consistently curtailed the Opposition's role by reducing the number of Assembly sittings. This session, originally scheduled for 14 days, was abruptly cut short to just seven sittings under the pretext of the Code of Conduct, culminating in the illegal passage of the budget," he said. "We were denied the opportunity to move cut motions on demands. How then can we question the government's reckless spending and unwanted projects being imposed



on the people?" Alemao questioned. He pointed out that in other states, Assembly sessions are held even during election periods. "But here, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and his 31 MLAs, including the Speaker, were afraid we would press for the introduction of Bills to scrap Section 39-A. They have already made crores of rupees by exploiting this provision, and now they want to continue looting until the next election," Alemao said. He said that this corrupt BJP Government stands exposed today and people of Goa will teach them lesson by showing them door in next assembly election.

Schools Directed To Ensure Menstrual Hygiene Facilities As Per Supreme Court Guidelines

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: The Directorate of Education has informed that the Supreme Court of India has issued directions to all educational institutions regarding menstrual hygiene facilities in schools. According to the directive, every school must provide



functional, gender-segregated toilets with proper water connectivity.

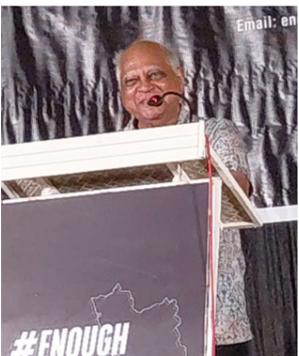
Toilets must also have handwashing facilities with soap and water available at all times. Schools have also been directed to provide oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkins manufactured in compliance with ASTM D-6954 standards free of cost to girl students. These napkins should

be easily accessible, preferably through sanitary napkin vending machines installed within toilet premises. Where installation is not immediately feasible, the napkins should be made available at a designated place or through an authorised person in the school.

'Natural Resources Belong To People, Govt Only A Trustee': Justice Ferdin Rebello

Team Goemkarponn

CANACONA: Former judge Ferdin Rebello said that forests, hills and rivers belong to the people and the government only acts as a trustee, not an owner of natural resources. Speaking at the 'Enough is Enough' meet in Canacona, Rebello criticised the government for overstepping its authority and said that under the public trust doctrine, natural resources such as forests, hills and rivers are the people's rights. "The government is not the private owner but only a trustee on behalf of the people. It cannot take away the rights of the people under the doctrine of trust," he said, adding that the government is duty-bound to protect these natural resources and has no authority to destroy them.



Rebello also urged that provisions such as Article 39A and other controversial laws under the Town and Country Planning Act be invoked to safeguard people's rights. He further revealed that on January 12, 2026, he had written to the President of India raising concerns over several issues. According to him, the State government recently informed him that the President had forwarded the matter to the State authorities for investigation.

Call to support Konkani cinema as 'Umesh' poster, teaser unveiled in Panaji

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: Just as the people of South India promote their regional languages, there is a need to support and promote Konkani films and music, said dignitaries at the unveiling of the poster, music, and teaser of the upcoming Konkani feature film 'Umesh', held at the Maquinez Palace, Entertainment Society of



Goa (ESG) on Sunday. Former India A and IPL

cricketer Swapnil Asnodkar attended the function as the special guest, while international singer and fadista Sonia Shirsat was the guest of honour. The film is produced by Gurunath Atmaram Patade and directed by Vardhan Vijaykumar Kamat under the banner of Guru & Associates Productions. Speaking on the occasion, the guests congratulated

the team for their efforts in promoting Konkani cinema and wished the film success. 'Umesh' tells the story of a once-celebrated local hero who now lives a quiet and reclusive life in a rural Goan village. The film explores themes of identity, rejection, human connection, and the search for recognition in a society that often forgets its own talents.

RGP Alleges BJP Curtailed Goa Assembly Session, Demands Special Session Over Budget

Team Goemkarponn

Panaji: RGP chief Manoj Parab has accused the Goa government of curtailing the Assembly session to push through the ₹30,000 crore state budget without proper discussion, calling it a "murder of democracy." Speaking to the media, Parab questioned who



decided to shorten the session and under whose influence, alleging that the budget's hurried passage was part of a larger political strategy. He pointed out that six bills,

including key legislation related to land issues, were introduced by RGP MLAs but were not taken up for discussion. Parab criticized the absence of 17 BJP MLAs during the budget vote and said the government's actions reflected fear of opposition scrutiny. Parab also highlighted that during his hunger strike, he had

been promised a short discussion on Section 39A, which was later denied. He emphasized that passing the budget without debate violated Articles 202 and 203 of the Constitution. He added that RGP has demanded a vote on account and that the session should continue to ensure public concerns are addressed.

Mount Everest Breweries Expands into Goa, Strengthening Presence in India's Tourism Hub

India: Mount Everest Breweries Ltd. (MEBL), one of India's fastest growing breweries and part of the Associated Kedia Group, has announced its expansion into Goa, marking its entry into the state as its 13th market of operations.

The move supports the company's broader goal of expanding its presence to 20 states by the end of FY26, with a long-term ambition of achieving a 10 percent national market share by 2029.

Goa, widely recognised as India's premier tourism destination, attracts a large number of domestic and international travellers every year.

The market presents a strong opportunity for brands to engage with a diverse and experience driven consumer base while building national visibility among travellers and younger consumers.

As part of its entry into the state, MEBL will introduce a portfolio of its key brands including STOK beer in both mild and strong variants, along with its whisky brand Hilfort, Nicobar gin and

Lemount brandy.

The portfolio is aimed at catering to consumers seeking quality driven beverage choices across retail and hospitality environments.

Commenting on the expansion, Vedant Kedia, Whole Time Director from Mount Everest Breweries Ltd. said, "Goa has always been a destination where consumers are open to discovering new brands and

products while connecting with travellers and younger consumers who influence drinking preferences across the country."

STOK, the

company's flagship beer brand, is

positioned around the lifestyle philosophy of #LiveTheChill, reflecting a relaxed and experiential approach to social drinking. Goa's laid back yet vibrant culture offers a natural setting for the brand to connect with younger consumers, particularly Gen Z and millennials who increasingly seek authenticity, quality ingredients and experience led consumption. To support its entry into the state, MEBL has partnered with two distributors and over 700 retailers across Goa.

The company's portfolio will be available through both retail outlets and the HoReCa segment, enabling broad access across the state's hospitality and tourism ecosystem. With this expansion, MEBL continues to strengthen its national footprint while building brands that are closely aligned with evolving consumer lifestyles and social experiences.

experiences.

This expansion allows us to introduce a wider portfolio of our



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Ponda Bypoll Heats Up as Congress, BJP Move to Finalise Candidates

at a key meeting of its central leadership in Delhi on Tuesday. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and Goa BJP president Damodar Naik are likely to be present for the discussions. Party sources indicated that two names — Ritesh Naik and Vishwanath Dalvi — have been forwarded by the state unit, with the Parliamentary Board set to decide the nominee. Senior party leaders have said that the

selection follows internal consultations, with the State Election Committee shortlisting candidates before sending recommendations to the central leadership. Even as the decision is awaited, BJP workers have already begun groundwork in the constituency. On the Congress side, former MGP leader Ketan Bhatikar has emerged as the frontrunner. Having joined the party recently, he is the only aspirant

to have formally applied for the ticket. The Goa Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) has recommended his name to the party's Central Election Committee for final approval. GPCC chief Amit Patkar confirmed that Bhatikar's application has been forwarded, noting that there was broad agreement within the party on his candidature. He expressed confidence that the Congress would secure victory in the bypoll

and build momentum for the 2027 Assembly elections.

Bhatikar, who had narrowly lost to Ravi Naik in the 2022 elections by a margin of around 100 votes, said he remains hopeful of the party's decision and will abide by it. Meanwhile, Congress leader Rajesh Vernekar emphasized unity within the party ranks, stating that leaders and workers are focused on defeating the BJP.

"They Will Blow Up The Entire Middle East": ...

leadership. He suggested that new leadership attempts had also been quickly neutralised during the

ongoing operations.

Emphasising the broader objective of the campaign, Trump said the actions were not carried

out solely for the benefit of the United States but were intended to enhance global security.

He argued that the

world faced serious risks if Iran were allowed to continue pursuing nuclear weapons.



60 Goan Women Launch Food Businesses With Rs 50,000 EntrepreneNaari Grants

■ Training and financial support help entrepreneurs expand branding, digital reach and market access.

New Delhi: Sixty women entrepreneurs from the food and beverage sector in Goa have begun expanding their businesses after completing specialised training under the Goa SBI Sashakti EntrepreneNaari initiative, receiving grants of ₹50,000 each to support their ventures.

The programme, supported by SBI Foundation in collaboration with SBI Life Insurance and implemented by the Society for Education, Environment and Development, aimed to equip women entrepreneurs with practical skills to grow their enterprises. The initiative also received mentorship and subject expertise from the Aspire For Her network. Launched last year, the programme selected 60 women entrepreneurs from both North and South Goa as part of a dedicated cohort within the larger EntrepreneNaari initiative. The participants were chosen from an initial pool of 122 shortlisted applicants from across the state.

Many of the women are home chefs, caterers and food processors who have built small businesses within their communities and are now looking to expand professionally.

Through the programme, participants received expert led online training, individual mentoring sessions and networking opportunities designed to strengthen

their business operations. The training focused on key aspects such as branding, digital outreach, customer engagement and strategies for accessing wider markets. Each participant also received a financial grant of ₹50,000 to support the early growth of her enterprise

The entrepreneurs represent a diverse range of food businesses across Goa, including traditional Goan cuisine, bakery and confectionery products, millet based foods, pickles, papads, masalas and catering services. Many operate home based ventures and are now working toward expanding production, obtaining licences such as Food Safety and Standards Authority of India certification and reaching larger markets. Participants included entrepreneurs such as Latifa Shaikh from Merces, known for healthy baked goods made with ingredients like ragi and jaggery, and Maya Shirodkar from Mapusa, who specialises in traditional Saraswat and Goan cuisine.

The programme concluded with an event that brought together partners, mentors and the entrepreneurs to review the initiative's impact and present grants and mementoes to the beneficiaries.

The gathering also created opportunities for participants to connect with mentors and fellow entrepreneurs as they continue developing their businesses

“If India Can Get Involved”: Finland President Urges New Delhi To Help Broker US–Iran Peace

■ Alexander Stubb calls for ceasefire as India steps up diplomatic outreach amid rising Middle East tensions

New Delhi: Finland's President Alexander Stubb has urged India to consider playing a diplomatic role in easing tensions between the United States and Iran, calling for an immediate ceasefire as the conflict in the Middle East intensifies. Speaking in an interview, Stubb suggested that New Delhi could help facilitate dialogue between the two sides. He pointed to recent remarks by India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, who has repeatedly called for de-escalation and diplomatic



engagement to stabilise the situation. The Finnish leader said a ceasefire was urgently needed to calm rising hostilities and indicated that India's diplomatic outreach could help create space for negotiations. India has recently intensified its

diplomatic engagement with Tehran as the conflict continues to evolve.

Jaishankar held another round of phone discussions with Iran's Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi to review the latest developments and assess the regional

situation. During the conversation, the Iranian minister described the conflict as a result of attacks by the United States and Israel, while asserting that Iran would exercise what it considers its right to self defence.

He also warned that the situation could have wider regional and global consequences.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also spoken with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, expressing concern over the growing violence and civilian casualties.



Congress Calls For Ban On RSS After US Panel Recommends Sanctions

■ Party cites USCIRF report on religious freedom as it urges action against the organisation

New Delhi: The Indian National Congress on Monday called for a ban on the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh after a report by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended sanctions against the organisation and India's external intelligence agency. In a post on X, the opposition party said the United States should impose a ban on the RSS, citing the commission's recommendations to the administration of Donald Trump. The party referred to the findings in the report, which claimed the organisation poses a threat to religious freedom. The Congress argued that any group opposing constitutional principles could undermine unity and social harmony in the country. It also referenced historical developments, noting that Sardar Vallabhbhai

Patel had imposed a ban on the RSS following the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948. The demand came a day after the USCIRF released its annual report recommending targeted sanctions against organisations including the RSS and the Research and Analysis Wing over alleged violations of religious freedom. The commission also urged Washington to designate India as a “Country of Particular Concern,” a classification used for nations accused of systematic and severe violations of religious freedom. In its report, the commission claimed that religious freedom conditions in India had continued to decline in 2025. It alleged that authorities had introduced or strengthened legislation affecting religious minorities, including stricter anti-conversion laws in several states.

“Reflect On Attacks On Hindu Temples In The US”: India Rejects USCIRF Religious Freedom Report

■ Government says the commission presents a distorted and biased view while ignoring incidents targeting the Indian diaspora in America

New Delhi: The government of India on Monday strongly rejected a report by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, accusing the body of presenting a distorted and selective assessment of religious freedom conditions in the country. Responding to



the report, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India categorically rejects

what he described as a motivated and biased portrayal. He stated that the commission has repeatedly relied on questionable sources and ideological narratives rather than objective facts while assessing the situation in India. According to the government, such recurring

misrepresentations undermine the credibility of the commission and reflect a pattern of selective criticism directed at India. Jaiswal also said the commission should instead examine incidents occurring within the United States, including cases of vandalism and attacks targeting Hindu temples.

LPG Tanker Nanda Devi Reaches Gujarat With 45,000 Tonnes Of Gas After Crossing Hormuz Strait

■ Arrival at Vadinar port highlights continued energy shipments despite disruptions in key global shipping route

New Delhi: The Indian LPG carrier Nanda Devi arrived in Gujarat on Tuesday carrying about 45,000 metric tonnes of liquefied petroleum gas after successfully crossing the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz. The vessel docked at Vadinar Port, where the cargo will be unloaded. The tanker had originally been scheduled to arrive at Kandla Port, but authorities later redirected it to Vadinar. A day earlier, another Indian flagged LPG carrier, Shivalik, safely



reached Mundra Port, delivering approximately 45,000 to 46,000 tonnes of LPG. The arrival of these vessels comes at a time when shipping routes in the region are facing disruptions due to ongoing geopolitical tensions. Government figures indicate that 22 Indian flagged ships are currently operating west of the Strait

of Hormuz, with a total of 611 Indian seafarers onboard. Authorities have stated that these vessels and their crews remain safe while continuing operations in the region. Another tanker, Jag Laadki, is currently en route to Mundra Port from the United Arab Emirates carrying nearly 81,000 tonnes of crude oil.

“The Bill Is Meant To Stop Fraud, Not Faith”: Fadnavis Defends Maharashtra Anti Conversion Law

■ Chief Minister says proposed legislation aims to prevent coercion and fraudulent conversions while protecting vulnerable individuals

New Delhi: Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has defended the proposed Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026, saying the legislation is intended to prevent fraudulent religious conversions and protect individuals from coercion, inducement and deception. Speaking about the bill introduced in the Maharashtra Assembly, Fadnavis said the law was prompted by cases where women were allegedly lured into relationships,



married and later abandoned, leaving them and their children facing serious social and legal difficulties. He said the proposed legislation seeks to address such situations by closing legal loopholes that could be misused. According to the Chief Minister, the bill is not

directed against any community and does not interfere with genuine personal choices regarding religion. He maintained that the objective is to curb forced or fraudulent conversions rather than restrict voluntary religious practices. Under the proposed law, any individual or organisation intending to convert a person from one religion to another must submit a notice to authorities at least 60 days in advance.

“I Felt My Time With Rajasthan Royals Was Over”: Sanju Samson On Joining CSK

■ Star wicketkeeper batter says move marks a new chapter ahead of IPL 2026

New Delhi: Indian wicketkeeper batter Sanju Samson has spoken about his decision to leave Rajasthan Royals, saying he felt his time with the franchise had come to an end after many seasons with the team. Samson will represent Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League 2026 season after joining the Chennai based franchise in a trade deal ahead of the tournament auction.



The move, finalised in November 2025, surprised many fans as Samson had long been associated

with Rajasthan Royals. The 31 year old cricketer from Kerala explained that the decision to move on came after several years with the Jaipur based side. According to him, the shift was part of his natural progression in the league. Samson had a long and successful association with Rajasthan Royals, representing the franchise across 11 IPL seasons. He first played for the team from 2013

to 2015 before spending two seasons with Delhi Capitals, previously known as Delhi Daredevils, between 2016 and 2017. He later returned to Rajasthan Royals in 2018 and remained with the side until 2025. During his tenure, Samson became the franchise's most capped player and its highest run scorer, establishing himself as one of the key figures in the team's history.



“No Emergency Situation”: FIDE Confirms Cyprus Will Host Candidates Tournament Despite Security Concerns

■ Chess body says venue will remain unchanged while monitoring regional tensions

New Delhi: The FIDE has ruled out any change of venue for the FIDE Candidates Tournament, stating that there is no emergency situation in Cyprus despite concerns about the ongoing conflict in the nearby Gulf region. The prestigious tournament, scheduled to begin on March 28, will determine the challengers for the world championship titles currently held by D Gukesh in the open category and Ju Wenjun in the women's section. Security concerns emerged after a recent drone attack on a British air base in Cyprus raised fears that tensions triggered by the conflict involving United States, Israel, and Iran could affect the island nation. Cyprus, located in the Mediterranean Sea south of Turkey, is also a member of the European

Union. Addressing the concerns, FIDE Chief Executive Officer Emil Sutovsky said preparations for the tournament are in their final stages and the organisation is closely monitoring developments. He stated that although Cyprus is geographically close to the conflict zone, it is not directly involved in the war and there are currently no security conditions that justify relocating the event. Sutovsky added that organisers remain in regular contact with local authorities who are assisting with arrangements and security measures for the tournament. The Candidates tournament will feature eight players each in the open and women's categories who qualified through a rigorous international process.

Goa College of Engineering And Chowgule College Register Wins On Day 10 Of Inter Collegiate Cricket Championship

■ Dominant bowling displays guide teams to comfortable victories at Goa University ground

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: Two matches were played on the tenth day of the Goa University Inter Collegiate Cricket Men Championship 2025-26, with Goa College of Engineering and Parvatibai Chowgule College of Arts and Science registering convincing victories at the Goa University Ground in Bambolim. In the first match of the day, Goa College of Engineering defeated V.M. Salgaocar College of Law by eight



wickets. After winning the toss, Goa College of Engineering opted to bowl first and produced an effective bowling performance to restrict the opposition to 95 all out in 18.4 overs. Mehank Dharwadkar top scored with 31 runs off 28 balls, while Deepraj Naik added

17. Narayan Sawant and Rajat Dalal were the standout bowlers, claiming three wickets each and putting the batting side under constant pressure. Chasing a modest target of 96, Goa College of Engineering reached the total comfortably, finishing at 96 for two

in just 10 overs. Smit Dalvi contributed 25 runs while Atchut Naik Dalal added 23 to guide the team to victory. Narayan Sawant was named the best performer of the match for his impressive spell with the ball. In the second match, Parvatibai Chowgule College of Arts and Science, Margao defeated Fr. Agnel College of Arts and Commerce, Pilar by six wickets. After winning the toss, Fr. Agnel College chose to bat first and posted 104 all out in 18.4 overs.

CD Fountainhead And Desserts N More Avengers Storm Into GSB Unity Cup Final

■ Dominant bowling displays guide teams to comfortable victories at Goa University ground

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: CD Fountainhead and Desserts N More Avengers secured impressive victories in the semifinals of the GSB Unity Cup 3.0 cricket tournament to book their places in the final. The matches were played on Saturday at the Dr. Rajendra Prasad Stadium in Margao. In the first semifinal, CD Fountainhead defeated K K Strikers by eight runs in a closely contested match. Batting first,



Fountainhead posted a total of 138 for nine in their allotted 20 overs. Vikrant Prabhu led the scoring with 35 runs, while Aditya Prabhugaonkar contributed 30 and Saeesh Prabhu Desai added 17 to strengthen the innings. Chasing a target of 139, K K Strikers were bowled out for 130

in 18.5 overs. Aditya Dalal played a remarkable knock of 50 off just 16 deliveries, but the lack of support from the other batters proved costly for his side. Pranav Biche delivered a decisive spell for Fountainhead, taking three wickets for 12 runs in 2.5 overs to help secure the win.

Goa Set To Host 48th Indian Masters National Badminton Championship In Navelim

■ Over 2,000 players from across India to compete in major veteran tournament from March 18 to 25

Team Goemkarponn

PANAJI: Goa will host the Yonex Sunrise 48th Indian Masters National Badminton Championship from March 18 to 25, 2026, bringing together veteran badminton players from across the country for one of India's largest masters level tournaments. The main venue for the championship will be the Manohar Parrikar Indoor Stadium in Navelim, while matches will also be held at the Multipurpose Stadium Fatorda in Margao. The tournament



is supported by Raison Foundation and will feature several former national champions and international players who have represented India in global competitions. A strong contingent of Goan players is expected to participate, including Dr. Satish Kudchadkar, Dr. Manju Khandeparkar, Pradeep Dhond, Tanaji

Sawant, Sandip Kanji, Kamlesh Kanji, Parag Chauhan, Darwin Barreto, Navneet Nasnodkar, Parteek Mahajan, Dr. Sandeep Fowkar and Sandhya Melasheemi. According to Manoj Patil, president of the Goa Badminton Association, the championship is expected to attract a large number of players and visitors.