

"I Am Not Here Just for Legacy, I Am Here for Work": **Ritesh Naik**



"As Ponda heads into a closely watched by-election following the passing of former Chief Minister Ravi Naik, the spotlight has turned to his son, Ritesh Ravi Naik, now contesting on a Bharatiya Janata Party ticket. In a candid conversation with Editor Suraj Nandrekar, Ritesh speaks about carrying forward his father's legacy, addressing criticism, and outlining his vision for the constituency amid a high-stakes political contest."

Q: How is your campaign going?

Ritesh Naik: The campaign has been very active and encouraging. We start early in the morning and continue till late evening. We are covering both city and rural areas, and the response has been consistently positive. People are coming out, meeting us, and sharing their views openly.

Q: What are people telling you when you meet them?

Ritesh Naik: People are very clear in their feedback. Many of them say they are satisfied with the work done so far and want continuity. At the same time, they are

also raising local issues, which is important. It helps us understand what needs immediate attention.

Q: Are you depending on your father's legacy to win?

Ritesh Naik: My father's legacy is something people remember with respect, and that connection is still there. But I am not depending only on that. I have been working on the ground for years. People have seen my work, and that matters more in the long run.

Q: What work have you personally done in Ponda?

Ritesh Naik: I have served as a councillor for several years and also as chairperson. During that time,

we focused on improving infrastructure, public spaces, and basic services. The idea has always been to ensure that development reaches people directly.

Q: What are the key projects you are highlighting in this election?

Ritesh Naik: The new market complex is one of the biggest projects and is close to completion. We have also worked on parks and public facilities. The library building is another important project that is in its final stage. These are visible developments that people can see for themselves.

Q: How emotional has this election been after

your father's passing?

Ritesh Naik: It has been emotional, not just for my family but for many people in Ponda. When we meet voters, they often speak about my father and share their experiences with him. At the same time, there is also a sense of responsibility to continue the work.

Q: How strong is the BJP's support behind you?

Ritesh Naik: The support from the party has been strong at every level. Leaders, workers, and supporters are all working together. That unity is important in a campaign like this.

Q: Has internal party

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TILLARI LAND MOVE SPARKS ALARM

Denotification Plan Triggers Widespread Opposition in North Goa

By **Satyavatinandan Satrekar**

The Goa government's proposal to denotify parts of the already notified Tillari Command Area in Dhargalim has sparked strong opposition from farmers, environmentalists and civil society groups across North Goa, raising concerns over the future of agriculture and resource management in the region.

The government recently issued a notification inviting objections to a proposal seeking removal of certain lands from the command area of the Tillari Irrigation Project. The move comes even as the state simultaneously pushes



to include additional land under the same project, creating confusion over policy intent.

Conceptualised soon after Goa's liberation, the Tillari Irrigation Project

was undertaken jointly with Maharashtra to address drinking water and irrigation needs.

While Maharashtra developed hydropower components, Goa

invested significantly in irrigation infrastructure such as canals and distribution systems to benefit agricultural lands in Pernem, Bardez and Bicholim.

Despite its potential, locals allege that irrigation coverage has remained inadequate, with limited efforts to promote agro-horticulture. Against this backdrop, the proposed denotification has alarmed residents, who fear it could undermine optimal use of existing infrastructure and open the door for conversion of fertile agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes.

Critics argue that selective removal of land from the command area may violate provisions

Key Facts and Concerns...

▶ The government proposes the denotification of 36.53 hectares from the Tillari Command Area.

▶ The parallel plan seeks the addition of 292.97 hectares under irrigation coverage.

▶ The project originally aimed at irrigation in Pernem, Bardez and Bicholim.

▶ Locals fear loss of agricultural land and a rise in non-agricultural conversion

▶ Concerns over violation of the Command Area Development Act, 1997

▶ Objections submitted by citizens before the March deadline.

▶ Critics warn of long-term environmental and ecological impact.

of the Command Area Development Act, 1997, which discourages arbitrary alterations once areas are notified. The current proposal seeks to delete around 36.53 hectares, following requests from landowners, while a parallel notification aims to add nearly 292.97 hectares

to improve utilisation.

Citizens who submitted objections before the March deadline have urged the government to reconsider, warning that the move could dilute the very purpose of the project and have lasting ecological and environmental consequences.

Sunday Thought

When Contaminated Water Meets Administrative Silence

Suraj Nandrekar

The unfolding water contamination crisis at Prabhu Violetta in Chicalim raises a question that goes beyond one residential complex: why does accountability in public health emergencies remain so elusive?

More than 300 residents reportedly falling ill, including children, is not a routine administrative lapse. It is a systemic failure. When an elected representative like Viriato Fernandes calls it a "humanitarian crisis," the phrase is not rhetorical exaggeration. It reflects the scale of neglect that residents appear to have endured. Yet, despite the seriousness of the allegations—contaminated water supply, a failed sewage treatment plant, and possible regulatory violations—there has been no visible move towards fixing responsibility in a meaningful way. No arrests. No clear chain of accountability. No urgency.

This absence of action reveals a familiar pattern. In India, public health crises linked to infrastructure or negligence often trigger immediate firefighting: medical camps, temporary water tankers, and assurances. What is consistently missing is the next step—holding those responsible to account. If the allegations are even partially true, the situation is deeply troubling. Mixing untreated borewell water with potable supply is not a minor oversight; it suggests either gross negligence or deliberate malpractice. A non-functional sewage treatment plant leading to contamination points to regulatory failure at multiple levels: builder compliance, inspection regimes, and enforcement. The role of oversight bodies also comes into question. If the Goa State Pollution Control Board had previously identified violations and imposed fines, why did the problem persist? Were penalties too weak to deter non-compliance? Or were follow-up inspections inadequate? Fines without enforcement often become just another cost of



doing business. Equally concerning is the reported absence of senior officials during the crisis. In moments of public distress, administrative visibility is not symbolic—it builds trust. When residents feel abandoned, it deepens the crisis from a health emergency into a governance failure. The lack of arrests so far may be explained, procedurally, by the need for investigation. Authorities may argue that water samples, lab reports, and technical assessments must establish causality before criminal liability is fixed. That is valid—to an extent. Due process matters.

But due process cannot become a shield for inertia. In cases involving potential endangerment of life, preliminary accountability measures are both possible and necessary. At the very least, there should be clear communication: what has been found so far, who is under scrutiny, and what timelines are being followed. Silence breeds suspicion. There is also a broader issue at play—the imbalance of power between residents and developers. Allegations of intimidation and legal pressure, if true, point to a culture where residents are often left to fight prolonged battles for basic rights like clean water and sanitation. This cannot be normalised.

What is needed now is a multi-layered response. First, an independent and time-bound inquiry to establish facts. Second, immediate corrective measures to ensure safe water supply. Third, strict enforcement against any violations, including criminal action if warranted. And finally, systemic reforms to prevent such lapses in residential complexes across Goa. Accountability delayed is accountability denied. If a crisis affecting hundreds does not trigger decisive action, it sends a dangerous message—that even large-scale public health risks can pass without consequence.

For the residents of Prabhu Violetta, this is not just about justice. It is about restoring a basic assurance: that the systems meant to protect them will not fail so completely again.

Masterstroke

On the Campaign Trail for the Ponda By-election

Irfan Iqbal Gheta

Election managers across party lines were expected to face a demanding contest as campaigning began for the prestigious Ponda by-election on April 9, 2026. Or so it seemed before the first speeches were delivered.

The ongoing West Asia conflict, though unfolding far from our shores, is already being felt in India, including Goa. Long, winding queues at petrol pumps and LPG distribution centres signal a worsening situation. There is little indication that normalcy will return soon, with the conflict showing no signs of easing.

Given this backdrop, many believed the Ponda by-election would offer insight into how the ruling establishment plans to navigate an uncertain future. It was expected that the campaign would address voters' anxieties and outline a roadmap for stability. That expectation has not been met.

What has emerged instead is a display of



political overconfidence. Across party lines, leaders appear to be speaking in one voice, marked more by assertion than substance. The voter, meanwhile, feels increasingly sidelined.

The Goa Congress has projected a victory margin of 5,000 votes, claiming strong resonance with the electorate. The ruling BJP, equally confident, predicts a win by 3,500 votes, invoking the enduring legacy of the late Ravi Naik. Such projections, however, raise more questions than they answer.

The Aam Aadmi Party, with Arvind Kejriwal campaigning actively, has taken a more cautious approach, seeking a single opportunity to prove itself.

Yet the central question remains: what is being offered to the voter? The campaign so far has been heavy on rhetoric and light on vision. As Goa heads towards the 2027 Assembly elections, this by-election serves as a telling reminder of how far political discourse has drifted from the concerns of the people.





“Time for Change”: Francis Co on Protests, Politics and the Battle for Taleigao

Suraj Nandrekar

Goa is firmly in election mode. With Zilla Panchayat polls concluded, CCP elections behind us, and the Ponda by-election around the corner, the political churn has already begun ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections. Party shifts, new alignments and renewed grassroots activity are shaping the landscape. At the same time, a wave of public protests across the state — over issues such as Section 39A, large-scale development, and land use changes — has

created an undercurrent of discontent. Amid this backdrop, one emerging political voice is Francis Co, a former AAP Goa general secretary, now active on the ground in Taleigao and Santa Cruz. Though not positioning himself strictly as an activist, Co has been visible at multiple protest sites, lending support to citizen movements. In a wide-ranging conversation, he spoke about his political journey, his assessment of Goa’s current situation, and his plans going forward. Co traces his entry into politics back to his college

days, when student politics first drew him in. “There’s a certain thrill in electoral politics. It’s a game of strategy,” he said. After spending years working in cities like Mumbai, Delhi and Pune, he returned to Goa during the Covid period. What began as a temporary stay soon turned into a decision to engage more deeply with the state’s issues. “Watching what was happening in Goa made me realise that if change has to happen, it has to come through electoral politics,” he said. “The same faces have been running the system for decades, shifting parties but not changing governance.” His critique of Goa’s political class is sharp. According to Co, the problem is less about party ideology and more about entrenched leadership. “Changing the people will change the system,” he argued, adding that prolonged tenures have led to complacency and a disconnect from public concerns.

Now focusing on the Taleigao constituency, Co acknowledges the challenge of taking on

established political figures but remains confident. “It’s not easy, but it’s not impossible,” he said. “There’s an aura built around certain leaders that they can’t be defeated. I don’t believe that.” He claims that dissatisfaction on the ground is significant, particularly over unchecked development and failing infrastructure. Taleigao, he pointed out, has seen rapid urbanisation, with a surge in apartment complexes and commercial activity. Yet, basic services have not kept pace.

“There’s a severe water shortage in parts of the constituency. Roads are poor. A major sewage project has been incomplete for years,” he said. “People bought homes expecting infrastructure, but that hasn’t materialised.”

Addressing the question of non-Goan residents in these new developments, Co dismissed the notion that they would be difficult to engage politically. “They face the same problems as everyone else. Many of them are actually looking for change,” he said.

On the issue of land

use and planning, Co alleged that development in Taleigao has been driven by selective changes in zoning over time. “Pieces of land have been converted gradually, from fields and orchards to commercial zones. It’s been systematic,” he claimed.

Beyond Taleigao, Co placed the ongoing protests across Goa at the centre of his political narrative. From opposition to Section 39A amendments to concerns over large infrastructure projects, he believes these movements reflect a growing public awakening.

“These protests are not isolated. They are building into a larger force,” he said. “People are realising that their environment, their heritage and their future are at stake.”

He was critical of the government’s selective responses to protests, particularly decisions to roll back contentious policies in specific areas. “If something is wrong, it should be corrected across Goa, not just in one constituency,” he said, warning that partial measures could backfire politically.

For Co, the core issue is governance driven by vested interests. “There is pressure from builder lobbies, casino interests and external forces. That’s shaping decisions,” he alleged. “Leaders are holding on to power because they have too much to lose.”

Despite his criticism, Co stopped short of framing the political battle strictly along party lines. While he admitted ideological differences with the BJP, he emphasised that leadership quality matters more. He cited former chief minister Manohar Parrikar as an example of leadership that transcended party identity.

Looking ahead, Co has not yet decided whether he will contest independently or align with a political party. For now, he says his focus is on building a grassroots network and connecting with people. “Party is just a platform,” he said. “What matters is bringing together like-minded people who genuinely want to work for Goa.” He also hinted at the possibility of broader alliances among opposition forces.

From Cow Dung to Cooking Flame: A Goa Village Shows the Way.

In Mayem, a decentralised biogas plant is doing something both simple and transformative. It is taking what villages have long considered waste—cow dung—and converting it into clean cooking gas. What sounds like an old idea has been reimaged here into a working model of circular energy, one that is drawing attention at a time of rising fuel costs and growing environmental concerns. Set up through the Department of Panchayati Raj, the plant processes nearly 5,000 kilograms of organic waste daily. The output is significant: around 130 cubic meters of biogas, enough

to support cooking needs while steadily reducing dependence on conventional LPG cylinders. The implications go beyond numbers. In practical terms, this is a system that addresses two persistent rural challenges at once—waste management and energy access. Instead of organic waste piling up or being discarded, it is being redirected into a controlled process that produces usable fuel. The by-product, often overlooked, can also serve as nutrient-rich slurry for agriculture, closing the loop even further. For residents, the shift is tangible. Cooking gas derived from local

waste reduces household expenditure and insulates families, to some extent, from fluctuations in LPG availability and pricing. It also brings a degree of energy security that centralised systems often struggle to provide. “Biogas is a clean and efficient solution that turns waste into a valuable source of energy,” says Mauvin Godinho. “The initiative by the Mayem Panchayat demonstrates how this can be effectively used for cooking at the local level. Effective waste management is not just about disposal, but about creating value from what we generate.” The project has been implemented

under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), through the GOBARdhan initiative—an effort that encourages villages to convert cattle and organic waste into energy and compost. While the policy framework exists at the national level, what sets Mayem apart is execution.

The plant is not a pilot in waiting; it is functional, scaled, and embedded in the daily life of the village. This distinction matters. Across India, waste-to-energy projects often struggle with maintenance, segregation issues, or lack of community participation. Mayem’s model suggests that decentralisation—



keeping systems local, manageable, and community-linked—may be the key to long-term sustainability.

There is also a broader lesson here for urban India. Cities generate far more wet waste than rural areas, yet struggle to process it efficiently. Large, centralised plants are expensive and often face logistical hurdles. Smaller, decentralised units, inspired by models like Mayem, could offer a more adaptable alternative—provided there is administrative will and consistent monitoring. At a time when concerns around energy security, climate change,

and waste management are converging, solutions like this carry added relevance. They are not headline-grabbing mega projects, but they work quietly, steadily, and with measurable impact. Mayem’s biogas plant does not claim to solve India’s energy challenges.

But it offers something perhaps more valuable—a proof of concept rooted in everyday reality. It shows that with the right mix of policy support, local governance, and community participation, even something as unassuming as cow dung can power a shift towards cleaner, more sustainable living.

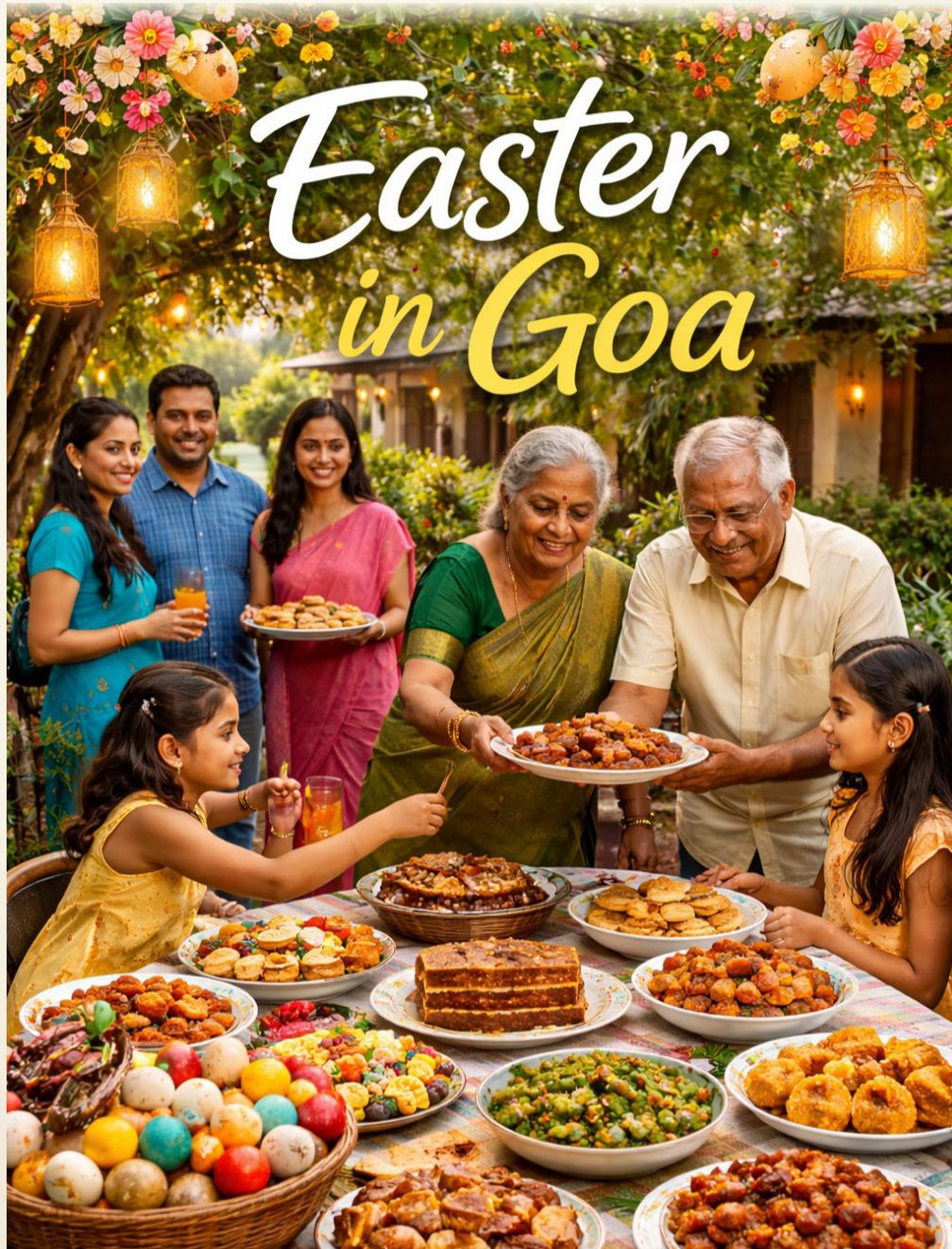
EASTER: WHERE FAITH, FOOD AND FAMILY COME TOGETHER



In Goa, Easter is not just a date on the Christian calendar. It is a season that unfolds gently, beginning with reflection and restraint, and ending in colour, celebration and the unmistakable warmth of community life. Across villages and towns—from Panaji to Salcete and Bardez—the journey to Easter begins with Lent, a period of fasting and prayer that shapes the spiritual rhythm of Goan Catholics. Homes grow quieter, meals simpler, and routines slow down. “Lent in Goa is still taken seriously, especially in villages. People cut down on celebrations, avoid meat on certain days, and focus more on prayer,” says Maria D’Souza, a resident of Salcete. “It prepares you for Easter in a meaningful way.”

As Holy Week approaches, the mood begins to shift. Good Friday is marked by deep devotion. Churches fill with worshippers, many dressed in subdued colours, gathering for long services that recount the crucifixion of Christ. In several parishes, processions wind through narrow roads, with hymns echoing across neighbourhoods. “It’s one of the most emotional days,” says Anthony Fernandes from Bardez. “When you see the procession, it reminds you of sacrifice.”

There is a silence that you can actually feel.” Then comes Easter



Sunday—and with it, a transformation. Morning begins early, with church bells ringing out in celebration. The sombre mood of the previous days gives way to joy. Churches are decorated with flowers, and the faithful arrive in their best attire. The Easter

Mass becomes a shared moment of renewal, marking the resurrection of Christ and the triumph of hope. “Easter Mass is always special,” says a parishioner from Panaji.

“There is a sense of happiness after days of reflection. You walk out

feeling lighter.” But in Goa, Easter does not end at the church doors.

It spills into homes, kitchens and dining tables. Food plays a central role in the celebration. After weeks of restraint, kitchens come alive with activity.

The aroma of traditional

dishes fills the air as families prepare elaborate meals. There is fugias, soft and fluffy, served alongside rich curries. Sorpotel and vindaloo take centre stage, often cooked in large quantities to feed both family and guests. And then come the sweets—colourful, rich, and deeply rooted in tradition. “For us, Easter is incomplete without making sweets at home,” says Clara Pereira, who spends days preparing marzipan and bebinca. “Even if it takes time, we still follow the old recipes.”

That’s what makes it special. “Children, too, look forward to the festive treats. Marzipan shaped like fruits and animals, chocolate eggs, and freshly fried goodies add to the excitement of the day. What stands out is not just the food, but the way it is shared. Easter in Goa is as much about family as it is about faith. Relatives gather, often travelling from different parts of the state or returning home from cities like Mumbai or abroad. Dining tables turn into spaces of reunion.

“It’s one of the few times in the year when everyone makes it a point to come home,” says Jason Rodrigues, a young professional working outside Goa. “You meet cousins, neighbours, everyone. It feels like the old days again.” The sense of togetherness extends beyond family. Neighbours visit each

other’s homes, exchanging sweets and spending time in conversation. In many places, doors remain open through the day. “There is no formal invitation needed,” says a resident from Bardez. “You just walk in, wish ‘Happy Easter’, and you are offered something to eat. That is how it has always been.”

There is also a quiet cultural blending that defines Easter in Goa. The state’s history has shaped its traditions, but its celebrations remain inclusive. It is common to see people from different communities joining in the festivities, reflecting Goa’s broader social fabric. In recent years, lifestyles have changed. Some families rely on store-bought sweets, and gatherings may be smaller. Yet, the core of Easter remains unchanged.

At its heart, Easter in Goa is about renewal—not just in a religious sense, but in the way it reconnects people. It brings families together, revives traditions, and reinforces a sense of belonging. As the day winds down and homes grow quieter again, what lingers is more than just the memory of a festive meal. It is the reassurance that traditions, when shared across generations, continue to hold meaning. “Easter is not just one day,” Maria D’Souza reflects. “It’s the feeling you carry with you after everything is over.”

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“I Am Not Here Just for Legacy, I Am Here for Work”: Ritesh Naik

politics affected your campaign?

Ritesh Naik: No, not really. Everyone is focused on the larger goal. There may be different opinions, but at the ground level, everyone is working together.

Q: Your opponents say you are a ‘family candidate’. Your response?

Ritesh Naik: That is a political statement. Ultimately, people will vote based on work. I have my own track record, and I believe that is what voters will consider.

Q: There are claims you are not accessible to people. Is that fair?

Ritesh Naik: I don’t think that is accurate. I have always been connected

with people. Even outside elections, I have been meeting residents and addressing their concerns. Accessibility is something people can judge for themselves.

Q: What is your vision for Ponda right now?

Ritesh Naik: The priority is to complete ongoing projects and improve infrastructure. We also

want to focus on public amenities and create better facilities for youth, including sports and community spaces.

Q: With limited time before the next election, what can you realistically deliver?

Ritesh Naik: Many projects are already in advanced stages, so the focus will be on completing them quickly.

At the same time, we will continue addressing day-to-day issues. Even in a short time, meaningful work can be done if there is clarity and commitment.

Q: How important is this by-election for your political future?

Ritesh Naik: Every election is important, but this one is about representing Ponda at a

crucial time. The focus is on delivering results and building trust.

Q: Why should voters choose you?

Ritesh Naik: I would say that I will work sincerely and stay connected with people. I understand the constituency, and I am committed to continuing development. I request voters to come out and support us.