



## Congress To Move Supreme Court Over Ponda By-Poll Order

Seeks stay on High Court ruling quashing EC notification.

### Team Goemkarponn

**PANAJI:** In a key political and legal development, the Congress party is set to move the Supreme Court on Friday with a special petition seeking a stay on the Bombay High Court order that quashed the Election Commission of India's (ECI) notification for the Ponda Assembly bypoll. The High Court's Goa bench, comprising Justices Valmiki Menezes and Amit Jamsandekar, on April 8 declared the ECI notification "null and void," effectively cancelling the bypoll that was scheduled



for April 9, with counting earlier slated for May 4. The by-election had been necessitated following the death of former Goa minister Ravi Naik in October last year. However, the court's decision came while hearing petitions filed by two voters who

challenged the validity of the notification, arguing that less than one year remains in the current Assembly's term.

Citing Section 151A of the Representation of the People Act, the petitioners contended that conducting a by-election is not mandatory if the

remainder of the term is under one year. They argued that any elected MLA would serve only for a short duration, rendering the exercise unnecessary. Appearing for the ECI, advocate Rama Rivankar stated that the High Court rejected the Commission's plea for a two-week stay on the order.

"The election has been cancelled. We had argued that the duration should be counted from the date of the vacancy, but the court has held that at least one year should remain from the date of counting of

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## Goa Moves High Court to Cancel Bail of Ajay Gupta in Forgery Case

### Team Goemkarponn

**PANAJI:** The State of Goa, through the Investigation Officer, has approached the High Court seeking cancellation of bail granted to accused Ajay Gupta in a document forgery case registered by

the Mapusa Police. Acting on the petition, the High Court has issued a notice to Ajay Gupta and scheduled the matter for hearing on May 4. The state has urged the court to revoke the bail, citing grounds linked to the ongoing investigation in the case.



## Nitish Kumar Takes Rajya Sabha Oath, Signals End of Long Tenure as Bihar Chief Minister

■ Veteran leader takes Rajya Sabha oath, paving the way for leadership change in Bihar.

**New Delhi:** Senior leader Nitish Kumar took oath as a Member of the Rajya Sabha on Friday, indicating his imminent departure from the Bihar government and setting the stage for a new मुख्यमंत्री to take charge in the state. The swearing in ceremony in New Delhi was attended by Bihar Deputy Chief Ministers Vijay Kumar Sinha and Samrat Choudhary, highlighting the significance of the transition underway.

His move to the Upper House of Parliament marks a major shift in Bihar's political landscape. A day prior to the ceremony, Kumar had reached the national

capital and confirmed his decision to step down from the मुख्यमंत्री's post.

He stated that after years of service in Bihar, he now intends to focus on his responsibilities at the national level. He expressed satisfaction with the work accomplished during his tenure and indicated that the transition would happen within a few days.

Kumar also made it clear that new leadership would soon be appointed in Bihar, both at the level of Chief Minister and the Council of Ministers. This announcement has triggered speculation about the next leadership

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## Ambulance Carrying Newborns Meets With Accident at Verna Bypass; no injuries reported

### Team Goemkarponn

**VERNA:** An ambulance transporting newborn babies to the South District Hospital in Margao met with an accident after colliding with a car on the Verna Bypass Road. The incident occurred while the ambulance was



en route to the hospital, raising immediate concern over the safety of the infants on board.

However, in a relief to all, no injuries were reported in the mishap.

All newborn babies, along with the medical staff accompanying them, were confirmed to be safe.

## "Free Navigation Must Continue": India Reaffirms Stand on Strait of Hormuz Amid Toll Speculation

■ No discussions held with Iran as concerns grow over potential transit charges and regional tensions.

**New Delhi:** India has reiterated its firm position on ensuring uninterrupted and secure maritime movement through the Strait of Hormuz, amid growing reports that Iran may consider imposing transit fees on vessels using the crucial shipping route.

Addressing the situation, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated that India continues to advocate for free and safe navigation through the strait. He emphasized that this stance remains unchanged despite emerging global



discussions around potential tolls.

Officials clarified that there have been no talks between India and Iran regarding any proposal to levy charges on passing ships. New Delhi has maintained that

it does not pay transit fees for India flagged vessels using the route and has not engaged in any negotiations on the matter.

The Strait of Hormuz, situated between Iran and Oman, serves as a vital

link between the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea. It is one of the world's most strategic maritime corridors, handling a significant share of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments, making it critical for India's energy security.

While reports suggest that Iran could introduce substantial charges for commercial shipping, there has been no official confirmation. The situation in the region remains tense, with vessel movement through the strait still slower than usual despite a temporary ceasefire.

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## Bail Cannot Be the End of the Story

The release on bail of all accused in the Birch nightclub tragedy should unsettle anyone who still believes that accountability follows disaster in a straight line. Twenty-five people died in a fire that, by all early accounts, was neither sudden nor unavoidable. And yet, within months, those charged in connection with the case are no longer in custody. The law may permit it. The system may justify it. But the question remains: what does this say about how we treat preventable death?

The instinctive response is to frame this as a legal matter. Bail, after all, is not acquittal. Courts are bound by procedure, evidence, and the principle that an accused is innocent until proven guilty. But to stop there is to miss the larger point. The Birch tragedy is not just a case file. It is a test of whether institutions can confront their own failures when those failures cost lives.

What makes this episode particularly troubling is not only the scale of the loss, but the predictability of it. The now-familiar details point to a pattern that is hard to dismiss as oversight. A crowded venue. Questionable safety compliance. Flammable interiors. Narrow access routes. Delayed emergency response. None of this belongs to the realm of the unforeseeable. These are the ingredients of disaster that regulators are meant to detect and prevent.

That they did not raises a deeper concern. The tragedy did not begin with the fire. It began much earlier, in the quiet accumulation of ignored warnings, compromised inspections, and administrative indifference. If a business can operate despite repeated violations, the failure is no longer individual. It is systemic.

This is where the narrative becomes uncomfortable. Because systemic failure is diffuse. It does not lend itself to easy blame. It implicates not just owners and managers, but inspectors who signed off, officials who looked away, and departments that failed to coordinate. It suggests that the problem is not a few bad actors, but a culture that tolerates risk until it turns fatal.

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*For the families of those who died, the sight of the accused returning to their lives so soon is bound to feel like a dilution of justice. For the public, it reinforces a long-standing suspicion: that consequences, in cases involving influence or money, are often temporary.*

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For the public, it reinforces a long-standing suspicion: that consequences, in cases involving influence or money, are often temporary.

This perception matters. Justice is not only about eventual conviction or acquittal. It is also about public confidence in the process. When that confidence erodes, so does the deterrent effect of the law. If the message that emerges from a tragedy of this magnitude is that accountability is negotiable, then the system has failed twice. Once in preventing the disaster, and again in responding to it.

There is also a danger in reducing the conversation to courtroom outcomes alone. Even if convictions are secured years from now, they will not answer the more pressing question of reform. What changes have been made to ensure that such a venue cannot operate under similar conditions again? Which officials have been held responsible for lapses in enforcement? What mechanisms are in place to ensure that safety certifications are not reduced to paperwork exercises? Without clear answers, the cycle is likely to repeat. India has seen this pattern before. Fires in hospitals, factories, and public spaces follow a grimly familiar script. Outrage, investigation, promises of reform, and then gradual amnesia. The Birch tragedy risks becoming another entry in that list unless it is treated as a turning point rather than an isolated incident. The focus, therefore, must shift. From individual guilt to institutional accountability. From reactive punishment to preventive governance. This means independent audits of licensing processes, stricter enforcement of fire safety norms, and real consequences for officials who fail in their duty. It also means resisting the temptation to move on once the immediate shock has passed. Bail cannot be the end of the story. It should not even be the headline. The real story is whether a system that allowed this tragedy to unfold has the capacity, or the will, to change. Until that question is answered, the sense of injustice will linger, and the promise of "never again" will ring hollow.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Ponda By-Poll: A Costly Misstep

The recent decision of the Bombay High Court to quash the Ponda by-election, just a day before polling, exposes a glaring lapse in our electoral planning and legal due diligence. While the Court has rightly upheld the law by noting that the elected representative would not have completed the mandatory minimum tenure, the larger issue is the sheer waste of public money, administrative effort and citizens' time. Elections are resource-intensive exercises involving deployment of staff, security arrangements, logistics and public funds. All of this has now gone to waste. Equally concerning is the inconvenience caused to voters, who were prepared to exercise their democratic right, only to be met with a last-minute cancellation. Such instances undermine public confidence in institutions and raise questions about the seriousness with which electoral processes are handled. This situation could and should have been avoided. Why was this legal aspect not examined thoroughly before announcing the by-election? Where was the due diligence? A basic legal scrutiny at the outset would have prevented this embarrassment. In a democracy, elections are not mere formalities. They are fundamental to governance and must be conducted with utmost responsibility and precision. Any lapse not only wastes resources but also erodes trust. It is time for accountability to be fixed and for systems to be strengthened so that such costly missteps are not repeated.

-Prakash Naik, Ponda, Goa

### Rising Road Accidents Demand Urgent Action

Sir/Madam, The reported 7% rise in road accidents and fatalities in Goa in the first quarter of 2026 compared to last year is deeply worrying and demands immediate attention from both authorities and citizens. (The Times of India). Despite repeated awareness campaigns and enforcement drives, the numbers continue to rise, indicating that existing measures are either insufficient or poorly implemented. Behind every statistic is a human life lost or shattered, and yet, the response often remains routine and reactive rather than preventive. A closer look at past data shows that accidents are not confined to highways or dangerous curves but occur even on straight roads and during routine travel. This points to a larger issue of reckless driving, speeding, and lack of discipline on the roads. At the same time, rural areas continue to witness disproportionately higher fatalities, highlighting gaps in infrastructure and emergency response systems. (The Times of India). Equally concerning is the role of human behaviour. Drunk driving, overspeeding, and disregard for basic traffic rules continue to be major contributors. Enforcement alone cannot solve this crisis unless it is consistent and visible. There is an urgent need for stricter policing, better road engineering, and sustained public awareness. Schools, colleges, and workplaces must also play a role in promoting responsible driving habits. Road safety cannot be treated as a seasonal campaign. It requires a collective, year-round commitment. If this trend continues unchecked, the cost will not just be numbers, but lives.

- Santosh Kamat, Margao, Goa

## Bombay High Court Grants Bail in NDPS Case, Cites Prolonged Pre-Trial Detention

Team Goemkarponn

**PANAJI:** The Bombay High Court at Goa has granted bail to Mohammed Osman, also known as Faisal, an accused in a narcotics case, observing that his continued incarceration for over four years without completion of trial amounted to a violation of his fundamental right to personal liberty. Justice Dr. Neela Gokhale noted that the prolonged detention was inconsistent with the stringent bail provisions



under the NDPS Act, especially when the trial had progressed slowly with only five witnesses examined so far. Osman was arrested on 5 February 2022 after Anjuna police allegedly seized 38.88 grams of MDMA from a vehicle in

Siolim based on a tip-off. The prosecution had argued that the seized substance constituted a commercial quantity and opposed bail, also referring to the accused's prior criminal record. However, the defence contended that the trial had been unduly delayed and pointed to inconsistencies in the recorded weight of the seized drugs.

The court observed that concerns raised by the prosecution could be addressed during trial

proceedings, but held that the delay in itself was sufficient grounds to grant bail.

Out of 13 witnesses cited by the prosecution, only five have been examined since September 2022. The accused has been released on a personal bond of ₹50,000 with sureties. As part of the bail conditions, he has been directed to remain within Goa, cooperate with court proceedings, and refrain from influencing witnesses.



## Calangute Massage Spa Scam Busted; Tourists Robbed, Touts Arrested

Team Goemkarponn

**CALANGUTE:** Calangute Police have busted a massage spa-linked cheating and robbery racket operating in the beach belt area after tourists were allegedly targeted and robbed. Acting on complaints, police carried out preventive arrests in the case. The arrested accused have been identified as Hemant Joshi (26), son of Mohar Singh Joshi, resident of Calangute, Bardez, Goa, originally from Goliar, Madhya Pradesh; Bharat Rathod (27), son of Kesu Rathod, resident of Nagoa, Bardez, Goa, originally from Bijapur, Karnataka; Pushpendra Meena (34),

son of Sahajram Meena, resident of Maddowado, Calangute, Bardez, Goa, originally from Todupura, Karauli district, Rajasthan; and Avinash Singh (29), son of Ramnath Singh, resident of Tivai Wado, Calangute, Goa, originally from Amrai Navada, Bhojpur, Bihar.

Police said the accused were allegedly involved in luring tourists into spa-related services and subsequently cheating and robbing them. Further investigation is underway to ascertain the wider network and involvement of other individuals in the racket. Authorities have warned that strict action will continue against such tourist-targeted scams in the coastal belt.

## Jazeera Airways Suspends Kuwait – Goa Flights Till May 15

Team Goemkarponn

**PANAJI:** Travellers from Goa are set to face disruption after Kuwait-based budget carrier Jazeera Airways temporarily suspended its Kuwait-Goa service until May 15, as part of a wider cancellation of flights to nine Indian cities. The airline has halted operations on the Kuwait-Goa route for

over a month, affecting passengers including expatriates, business travellers and tourists who rely on the direct connection. The suspension applies to both outbound and inbound flights during the period. Apart from Goa, the airline has also paused services to several other Indian destinations, impacting connectivity between Kuwait and multiple

regional airports. With the direct service suspended, passengers from Goa may now have to depend on connecting flights via other Gulf hubs or alternative airlines. Jazeera Airways has offered full refunds to affected passengers. Those who booked through travel agents have been advised to contact them directly, while customers who made direct bookings



can seek refunds through the airline's website or customer support channels. The temporary suspension is expected to affect travel plans of Goans working in Kuwait as well as visitors planning trips to the state. The airline indicated that services, including the Kuwait-Goa route, are likely to resume after May 15 subject to operational conditions.

## Unhygienic Food Units Penalised In Salcete, 450 Kg Farsan Seized

Team Goemkarponn

**MARGAO:** A complaint-based inspection drive at Gogol and Rawanfond in Salcete led to action against three food manufacturing units for serious food safety violations, with authorities seizing 450 kg of farsan and imposing penalties. Health Minister Vishwajit Rane said ensuring safe and hygienic food for the people of Goa remains a priority and strict action will continue against violators. During the inspections, officials found one unit operating without a licence for several years and under highly unhygienic conditions. The unit was ordered to stop operations and a penalty of Rs 10,000 was imposed. Unlabelled farsan sourced from Hubli along with locally



manufactured stock was seized for destruction. Another unit was found storing expired food items worth around Rs 18,000. A third unit was using synthetic colour in food preparation, leading to seizure of stock and a penalty of Rs 5,000. The operator was also directed to cease operations and rectify deficiencies. Overall, about 450 kg of farsan valued at approximately Rs

85,000 was seized during the drive and samples were sent for analysis. Food business operators were also sensitised on permitted food colours, hygiene standards and safe disposal of used cooking oil under the RUCO initiative. The minister said enforcement drives will continue across the state to ensure safe food for consumers and strict compliance with food safety norms.



## Min Digambar Assures Fishermen Of Swift Action On Parking, Road Issues In Benaulim

Team Goemkarponn

**BENAULIM:** Addressing concerns of the local fishing community, fishermen representatives along with Panch members and the Benaulim Panchayat team jointly met the Captain of Ports (COP) Department and Minister Digambar Kamat over ongoing parking and road-related issues in the area. Responding promptly to the request, COP officials along with Minister Digambar Kamat visited the site and conducted a detailed inspection of the situation.

## Children's Court Sends Soham Naik to Judicial Custody in Second POC SO Case

Team Goemkarponn

**PANAJI:** The Children's Court has ordered 20-year-old Soham Naik to remain in judicial custody for 14 days in connection with a second case involving alleged sexual assault of a minor. Naik, the son of BJP-supported Curchoorem-Cacora councillor Sushant Naik, is currently facing five separate FIRs.

Police records indicate that four of these cases involve allegations linked to minor victims, while in one case both the complainant and the accused were adults at the time of the alleged incident.

The Crime Branch, which is handling the investigation, has stated that the accused is believed to have



committed the alleged offences over a span of nearly three years, targeting multiple victims during this period.

Naik, a resident of Madhegal in Cacora, was arrested on March 21 after public protests erupted outside the Curchoorem Police Station, where locals had gathered demanding swift action in the case.

## Senior Citizen Duped Of Rs 2.10 Lakh In KYC Update Fraud At Porvorim

**Team Goemkarponn**

**PORVORIM:** A 70-year-old resident of Alto Porvorim was cheated of ₹2,10,476 by an unknown person who impersonated himself as an HDFC Bank official on the pretext of updating KYC details.

According to police, the complainant, Subhash Bhalchandra Joshi of PDA



Colony, Sawali House, Alto Porvorim, reported the incident on April 8 at 7:42 pm. He stated that the fraud occurred in the

early hours of April 3 at around 12:59 am, when he received a call from an unknown individual claiming to be from HDFC Bank.

The caller allegedly convinced the complainant to open his net banking and enable screen sharing on his mobile phone, purportedly to complete the KYC update. After

gaining remote access to the device, the accused carried out unauthorized transactions and withdrew a total of ₹2,10,476 from the complainant's bank account.

Police said the victim later realized he had been cheated and lodged a complaint. Further investigation is in progress under PSI Dishan Naik.

## Two Held For Matka Gambling In Panaji, Cash Seized

**Team Goemkarponn**

**PANAJI:** Panaji Police registered two separate cases on April 8 and arrested two persons for allegedly accepting matka bets at public places in Tiswadi. In the first case, based on the complaint of HC Pandurang Gawas of Panaji Police Station, police apprehended Rodrappa Talwar (52), a resident of St Inez, Panaji, at around 3:50 pm near National Lalkies, Punan, Tiswadi. The accused was allegedly caught red-handed accepting money bets on numerical digital numbers as a game of chance from members of the public. Police seized cash amounting to ₹1,350 in different denominations along with other gambling articles. In another case registered at 7:51 pm,



based on the complaint of HC Sainath Vaipankar, police arrested Ali Shaikh (28), a resident of Ramnagar, Reis Magos, Bardez.

He was caught at around 5:52 pm near Shantaram Cafe, Caranzalem, while allegedly accepting matka bets in an open public place. Police seized ₹1,240 in cash in different denominations along with other gambling articles. Further investigation in both cases is in progress with Panaji Police.

## 2 Booked For Theft At Supermarket In Corlim

**Team Goemkarponn**

**CORLIM:** Two persons have been booked for allegedly stealing cash, a mobile phone and grocery items from a supermarket in Corlim, Tiswadi. According to police, the complaint was filed by Paul Fernandes (64), a retired resident of

Brook Fields Apartment, Goltim-Navelim, Divar. The incident occurred prior to 6 pm on April 8 at Geen Supermarket, Keni Colony, Corlim. The accused have been identified as Kajol Kumari Aruka, a resident of Corlim and an

employee of the complainant's brother-in-law, and Om Sai Roul, also a resident of Corlim. Both are natives of Ganjam district, Odisha. Police said the accused, acting with common

intention, allegedly stole ₹5,000 in cash from the counter, a grey Redmi mobile phone worth ₹19,000, and grocery items including deodorants, room fresheners and face wash worth ₹2,000. The total value of the stolen property is estimated at ₹26,000.



## 2 Injured After Bullet Bike Crashes During Overtaking Near Borim Bridge

**Team Goemkarponn**

**BORIM:** Two persons were injured after a Royal Enfield motorcycle allegedly being ridden in a rash and negligent manner crashed into two cars near Borim Bridge on the Loutolim side. According to police, the case was registered based on the complaint of ASI Anant Gaonkar of Maina Curtorim Police Station. The incident occurred on April 5 at around 11:30 am when the accused, Aditya Gaonkar of Shiroda, Ponda, was riding a Royal Enfield Bullet from Verna

towards Ponda. Police said that while attempting to overtake a Hyundai Venue car near Borim Bridge, the rider allegedly dashed the rear right side of the vehicle, which was moving in the same direction. The motorcycle then skidded and collided with an oncoming Maruti Ciaz car. As a result of the accident, the rider Aditya Gaonkar and pillion rider Harsh Naik, also a resident of Shiroda, Ponda, sustained injuries. Further investigation is in progress with ASI Anant Gaonkar of Maina Curtorim Police Station.

## Pedestrian Injured In Rash Driving Accident At Calangute Junction

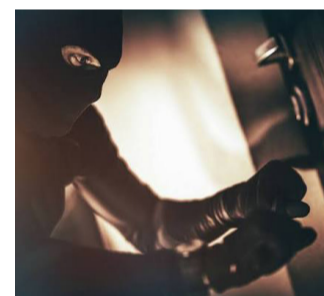
**Team Goemkarponn**

**CALANGUTE:** A pedestrian sustained a fracture while his friend suffered a head injury after being hit by a scooter driven in a rash and negligent manner at Bodkawado Junction, Calangute. According to police, the complaint was filed by Parshuram Kallappa Shiranagi (34), a resident of Naikawado, Verla, Canca, Bardez. The incident occurred on April 8 at around 10:33



pm when the accused, identified as Nur Alam Mondal (18), a native of West Bengal and currently residing at Nagoa, was riding a Yamaha Fascino scooter bearing registration number GA-

03-AQ-6583. Police said the rider allegedly drove the scooter in a rash and negligent manner and dashed against the complainant and his friend, Hanumanta Talwar, who were on foot near Bodkawado Junction. The impact caused a fracture to the complainant's right leg and a head injury to Talwar. The accused rider also reportedly collided with an Eicher goods carrier bearing registration number GA-03-K-8908 following the incident.



## Cash Of Rs 2.8 Lakh Stolen From Fatorda Office After Break-In

**Team Goemkarponn**

**FATORDA:** Unknown burglars broke into an office at Fatorda and decamped with cash amounting to ₹2,80,000 on April 7 evening. According to police, complainant Rybeek Pereira, a resident of Sinquetim, Navelim, Margao, reported that the incident occurred between 7:30 pm and 8:00 pm at the KFC Building, Fatorda.

The accused allegedly gained entry into the L & L Developers office by forcefully breaking open the main door. After entering the premises, the accused fled with cash of ₹2,80,000 kept inside the office.

The theft was noticed later, following which a complaint was lodged with Fatorda Police.

Further investigation is in progress with PSI Atikesh Khedekar of Fatorda Police Station.

## Driver Brutally Assaulted, Wrongfully Confined After Truck Accident In Panaji

**Team Goemkarponn**

**PANAJI:** A 24-year-old driver from Nepal was allegedly wrongfully confined and brutally assaulted with a deadly weapon after a truck accident near the KTC bus stand in Panaji.

According to the complaint filed by Shankar Ram Bahadur Bika, a resident of Bhatlem, Altinho, Panaji, the incident occurred on April



8 at around 12:30 pm in a rented room near the KTC Bus Stand parking area. The accused, identified as Samir Khan of Panaji, had employed the complainant as a driver for a water tanker bearing registration number GA-07-F-8754. Police said the complainant allegedly

dashed the truck into a BMW car, resulting in a loss estimated at ₹1,20,000. Following the incident, the complainant reportedly left the job and started working for another employer. Later, the accused allegedly intercepted the complainant while he was driving another vehicle, took him to his office, wrongfully confined him, and assaulted him with a deadly weapon.

## South Goa Taxi Association files complaint against influencer over 'taxi mafia' video

Team Goemkarponn

**VASCO:** The South Goa Taxi Association filed a complaint at Vasco Police Station against social media influencer Rupali Dixit, alleging that a video posted by her on Instagram has defamed local taxi operators by branding them as a "taxi mafia" and accusing them of overcharging passengers. According to the complaint, the issue stems from a trip undertaken around two months ago, when Rupali Dixit hired a tourist



taxi — a Maruti Ertiga (GA-06-T-5940) — from Dabolim Airport to Malvan, Maharashtra. The taxi operator reportedly charged Rs 5,500 for the late-night journey, an amount the association claims is lower than the rate prescribed under the government gazette for

such trips. Taxi operators stated that despite this, Dixit recently posted a video on her social media platforms tagging "Taxi Driver Mafia in Goa" and alleging that customers are being charged excessively. The association has termed these claims as

"false and misleading," stating that such content is harming the reputation and livelihood of taxi drivers in the state. In the complaint submitted to the Police Inspector of Vasco Police Station, association members said the video has triggered negative perceptions among tourists and the general public. They added that many local taxi operators belong to families engaged in the profession for generations and depend entirely on this business for their income.

## Divyang Bandhan Yojana Notified In Goa; ₹1 Lakh Award For Marriage With Persons With Disabilities

Team Goemkarponn

**PANAJI:** The Government of Goa has notified the Divyang Bandhan Yojana, a scheme aimed at encouraging marriages involving persons with disabilities by providing financial assistance. The notification, issued by the Department for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, has been published in the Official Gazette and comes into

force from the date of publication. Under the scheme, a married couple in which either one or both partners are persons with disabilities will be eligible for a monetary award of ₹1,00,000, subject to fulfillment of specified conditions. The assistance will be paid to the partner with disabilities, while in cases where both partners are disabled, the amount will be jointly disbursed.



## RPF Seizes 7.4 Kg Ganja At Madgaon Railway Station, 2 Held

Team Goemkarponn

**MARGAO:** Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel seized approximately 7.4 kg of cannabis and apprehended two suspects during surveillance at Madgaon Railway Station on April 9. According to RPF sources, on-duty staff monitoring CCTV footage noticed two suspicious individuals carrying a bag on Platform No. 3. The bag was checked, leading to the recovery of around

7.400 kg of cannabis (ganja). Both individuals were detained and brought to the RPF post. The seized contraband, valued at approximately Rs 7.5 lakh as per the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), was later handed over along with the accused to NCB Goa for further legal action. NCB Goa registered a case vide Crime No. 04/2026 under Sections 20(b)(ii) (B), 8 and 29 of the NDPS Act, 1985, on April 9. Further investigation is in progress.

## Cardinal Ferrão Appointed to Vatican Communication Body

Team Goemkarponn

**PANAJI:** Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão, who also heads the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), has been named to a key position within the Vatican's Dicastery for Communication, placing him among the most

influential Catholic figures from India and the broader Asian region.

The appointment is being viewed as a notable recognition of the increasing role of the Indian Church in the leadership and decision-making structures of the global Catholic community.

His presence in the FABC has already positioned him as a leading voice for Asian bishops, and this new responsibility further elevates his standing within the universal Church.

The Dicastery for Communication is responsible for overseeing



the Vatican's global media operations, including news dissemination, digital outreach, and public engagement strategies.

## Lok Sabha Speaker Inaugurates Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference In Goa

Team Goemkarponn

**PANAJI:** Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Thursday inaugurated the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), India Region, Zone-VII (West Zone) Conference in Goa, stating that parliamentary democracy is globally recognised as the best system of governance and that young legislators have a crucial role in achieving the goal of a developed India.



Addressing delegates, Birla said active participation of youth and legislators is vital for strengthening democracy. He highlighted that while artificial intelligence and technology are shaping governance, human

sensitivity remains equally important.

He also stressed that people have high expectations from elected representatives and called for healthy competition among state legislatures to become model assemblies. Birla described Goa as a land of tourism, art, culture and energy, and praised the role of young MLAs in promoting democratic values. He urged coastal states to adopt best practices

from one another and turn challenges into opportunities, citing examples of development initiatives in coastal regions. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said Goa, Maharashtra and Gujarat should work together to boost trade, tourism corridors, urban infrastructure and coastal management. He also informed that more than 240 citizen services across 40 departments have been expanded in Goa.

## Flood-Prone Poinguinim Road To Be Elevated; ₹3.71 Cr Work Begins

Team Goemkarponn

**CANACONA:** The chronically flood-prone stretch at Poinguinim, which claimed two lives during the infamous 2009 Canacona floods, will finally be elevated with safety measures in place.

The work for improvement and strengthening of the existing road from Poinguinim Bazar to Adinala at Welwada in V.P. Poinguinim was inaugurated on Thursday. Tended at an approximate cost of ₹3.71 crore, the 250-metre road



stretch will be elevated by 1.5 metres. Concrete retaining walls will be

constructed on both sides along with two box culverts to improve

drainage and prevent flooding.

The Poinguinim Bazar to Adinala road (Welwada to Mhalwada) will also be beautified with a paver-laid walking track, sitting benches and illumination. The work is expected to commence

immediately and is slated for completion within six months. The Welwada-Mhalwada stretch leading towards Katiem, Galgibaga has been among the worst affected during monsoons, with the road getting submerged every year.

# Why Suez Canal Charges Are Legal but Hormuz Toll Faces Global Opposition

International maritime law draws a clear distinction between man-made canals and natural straits.

**New Delhi:** The debate over potential transit fees in the Strait of Hormuz has intensified amid rising tensions in West Asia, with legal experts pointing to international law that clearly differentiates between canals and natural waterways. Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, countries bordering strategic straits cannot impose charges simply for allowing ships to pass through. These waterways are considered international passages where vessels enjoy the right of transit without obstruction or mandatory fees. Limited charges are permitted only for specific services such as navigation assistance or port related support, and must be applied fairly. This principle is why any move by Iran to levy tolls on ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz is widely viewed as inconsistent with established maritime norms.

The narrow but crucial route connects the



Persian Gulf to the open ocean and handles a significant share of global oil and gas shipments, making uninterrupted access essential for global trade. In contrast, canals such as the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal operate under a different legal framework.

As artificial waterways constructed and maintained by states, they are allowed to charge transit fees to recover operational and

infrastructure costs. These charges are internationally recognised and form a standard part of global shipping.

The distinction lies in the nature of the route. Natural straits are shared global corridors governed by the principle of free passage, while canals are sovereign infrastructure projects where usage fees are permitted.

The issue has gained urgency as tensions in the region disrupt shipping

flows and raise concerns among energy dependent nations.

Any attempt to impose unilateral tolls in the Strait of Hormuz could have far reaching consequences for global trade, particularly for countries heavily reliant on oil imports passing through the route.

As diplomatic efforts continue, the question of free navigation versus control remains central to resolving the crisis.

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## Nitish Kumar Takes Rajya Sabha Oath, Signals End of Long Tenure as Bihar Chief Minister

lineup, though no official names have been declared yet. Widely regarded as Bihar's longest serving Chief Minister, Kumar has had a long and influential political career. He began his journey



as a Member of the

Legislative Assembly in 1985 and later held key portfolios as a Union Minister in the government led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

He first assumed office as Bihar's Chief Minister in 2005 and has

since remained one of the most prominent and experienced figures in Indian politics.

His transition to a parliamentary role signals a new chapter, both for him and for Bihar's governance.

## "Free Navigation Must Continue": India Reaffirms Stand on Strait of Hormuz Amid Toll Speculation

Indian authorities are also in contact with Iranian counterparts to ensure smoother movement of oil consignments during this limited pause in hostilities. Several India bound ships are reportedly facing delays, contributing to congestion and affecting global supply chains. India has consistently underlined that the Strait of Hormuz must remain



open and accessible in accordance with international maritime principles, stressing the

importance of stability and cooperation in one of the world's busiest trade routes.

## Congress To Move Supreme Court Over Ponda By-Poll Order

votes," he said. With Assembly elections in Goa expected in February 2027, the ruling has sparked a major political debate. Congress, in its petition before the Supreme Court, is expected to seek urgent intervention to revive the electoral process, setting the stage for a crucial legal battle over the interpretation of the one-year clause.



## GTDC Records Consistent Profits as It Marks 44 Years of Growth and Tourism Excellence

### Team Goemkarponn

**Panaji:** Celebration in Panaji highlights achievements, staff contributions, and future vision for Goa's tourism sector.

The Goa Tourism Development Corporation commemorated its 44th Corporation Day on April 8, 2026, with a vibrant celebration held at the Panaji riverfront.

The occasion reflected the organisation's sustained efforts to strengthen tourism in the state while enhancing the overall travel experience for visitors.

The event witnessed the presence of senior leadership, including the Chairman, Managing Director, key officials, staff members, and their families. The Tourism Minister also attended the function, extending his greetings and acknowledging the Corporation's role in promoting Goa as a leading destination. Addressing the gathering, the Chairman highlighted the Corporation's focus on building a more efficient and sustainable organisation.

He noted that the consistent support of the leadership team has played a vital role in driving operational excellence.

Emphasising financial stability, he pointed out that the Corporation has maintained steady operational profits over recent years and remains committed to contributing positively to the state's tourism ecosystem.

The Managing Director reflected on the organisation's journey over the past four decades, crediting both former and current staff for its progress and achievements.

He stated that collective efforts have enabled the Corporation to become self-sufficient and consistently deliver returns, including declaring dividends to the government for four consecutive years.

The celebration brought together employees from various departments in a lively and engaging atmosphere.

Cultural performances formed a major highlight, with a fashion show presented by women staff and energetic dance performances by male staff members drawing appreciation from the audience.

Interactive games and entertainment activities further added to the festive spirit, with participants receiving spot prizes and recognition for their performances.

The event served as a moment to acknowledge the dedication of employees while reinforcing the Corporation's long-term commitment to strengthening tourism in Goa. The programme concluded with a formal vote of thanks, expressing appreciation to all those who contributed to the success of the celebration.

## “No Talks Without Ceasefire”: Iran Halts US Negotiations Amid Escalating Lebanon Strikes

■ Rising tensions in the region stall diplomacy as Israel intensifies military action and ceasefire conditions take centre stage.

**New Delhi:** Iran has suspended its negotiations with the United States, making it clear that talks will not resume until a ceasefire is established between Israel and Lebanon. The decision comes amid escalating military strikes and growing instability in the region. According to official statements reported by Iranian media, discussions with Washington have been put on hold as long as Israeli attacks in Lebanon continue. Tehran has linked any future engagement



directly to the cessation of hostilities, emphasizing that ongoing strikes undermine diplomatic efforts. Iran also dismissed reports suggesting that a delegation had travelled to Islamabad for negotiations with the United States.

Authorities described

these claims as inaccurate and reiterated that no talks are planned under the current conditions. Meanwhile, the United States is preparing to host discussions involving Israel and Lebanon in Washington next week, aiming to address the

fragile situation and explore possibilities for a ceasefire.

The move comes as concerns rise over the sustainability of recent diplomatic understandings in the region. The latest escalation follows some of the most intense Israeli strikes on Lebanon in recent months, resulting in significant casualties and further complicating the already volatile situation. These developments have cast doubt on recent diplomatic progress and heightened fears of broader regional instability.



## “With Deep Anguish, I Tender My Resignation”: Justice Yashwant Varma Quits Amid Cash Controversy

■ Exit brings an end to impeachment proceedings linked to recovery of cash from official residence.

**New Delhi:** Justice Yashwant Varma has stepped down from his position as a judge of the Allahabad High Court, bringing a sudden end to the impeachment process initiated against him following a major cash recovery controversy. His resignation has been submitted to President Droupadi Murmu and takes immediate effect. In his resignation letter, Justice Varma expressed deep distress over the circumstances that led to his decision. While he chose not to elaborate on the reasons, he conveyed that the move was made with considerable anguish. With his resignation, the ongoing parliamentary process aimed at his removal is expected to be discontinued. The controversy dates back to March 14, 2025, when a large quantity of cash

was reportedly discovered at his official residence in Lutyens' Delhi. At the time, he was serving as a judge of the Delhi High Court. The cash, some of which was allegedly burnt, was found in a storeroom located near the servants' quarters. Justice Varma and his wife were not present in Delhi during the incident, as they were in Bhopal.

Following the discovery, an internal inquiry was initiated by the Supreme Court through a three judge committee. The panel later submitted its findings to then Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna. As the matter progressed, judicial responsibilities were withdrawn from Justice Varma, and he was transferred back to his parent Allahabad High Court with instructions that no judicial work be assigned to him.

## “Bengal Still Not Self-Reliant in Fish Production”: PM Modi Targets State Government

■ Mamata Banerjee hits back, accuses Prime Minister of misrepresenting facts ahead of polls.

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a sharp attack on the West Bengal government over its fish farming policies, alleging that the state has failed to achieve self-reliance in fish production despite strong local demand. Addressing a public gathering in Purba Medinipur, he questioned the performance of the

ruling Trinamool Congress over the past decade and a half.

He pointed out that fish consumption remains high in the state, yet Bengal continues to depend on imports from other regions to meet domestic needs.

Highlighting national progress, he said that India has seen a significant rise in fish production and seafood

exports in recent years, but claimed that similar growth has not been reflected in West Bengal due to policy shortcomings. The Prime Minister described the situation as a result of “misguided policies” and urged voters to bring change in the upcoming assembly elections. He also announced a set of electoral assurances



and criticised the state administration, alleging it had hindered development. Responding strongly, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee rejected the claims, stating that the Prime Minister had presented incorrect information.

## “Bhay Nahi Bharosa”: Amit Shah Unveils BJP Manifesto for Bengal Polls

■ Party promises relief for farmers, jobs for youth and safety for women ahead of two-phase elections.

**New Delhi:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday released the Bharatiya Janata Party's manifesto for the upcoming West Bengal Assembly elections, outlining the party's vision and key promises for the state. The document, launched at an event in Kolkata, focuses on addressing concerns across multiple sections of society. It highlights measures aimed at



supporting farmers facing crop related uncertainties, creating employment opportunities for youth, and improving safety and security for women. Presenting the manifesto, Shah stated that it offers a roadmap to address

what he described as widespread dissatisfaction in the state. He emphasised that the proposals are designed to instil confidence among citizens while preserving Bengal's cultural identity and pride. The manifesto positions itself as a comprehensive plan to tackle economic and social challenges, while also promising development and governance reforms.

## “Relief for One Week”: Pawan Khera Gets Anticipatory Bail in Case Filed by Assam CM's Wife

■ Telangana High Court grants temporary protection as legal battle intensifies over defamation allegations

**New Delhi:** The Telangana High Court has granted interim relief to Congress leader Pawan Khera, providing him anticipatory bail for one week in connection with a case filed by Riniki Bhuyan Sharma, wife of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. The order was passed by Justice K Sujana, allowing Khera a week's time to approach the appropriate court for



further legal relief. The court also imposed certain conditions while granting the temporary protection. A detailed copy of the order is awaited. Khera had approached the

Telangana High Court seeking anticipatory bail, citing his residence in Hyderabad. The case originates from an FIR registered in Assam, which has now led to a jurisdictional debate during court proceedings. During the hearing, senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, representing Khera, argued that the charges in the FIR were excessive for a defamation related matter.

## “It’s In My Blood”: Mukul Choudhary Powers LSG to Dramatic Last-Ball Win

■ Young wicketkeeper batter announces arrival with explosive knock in high pressure IPL clash.

**New Delhi:** Rising star Mukul Choudhary delivered a stunning performance to guide Lucknow Super Giants to a thrilling last ball victory over Kolkata Knight Riders in an IPL 2026 encounter, marking his breakthrough moment on the big stage. The 21 year old wicketkeeper batter remained unbeaten on 54 off just 27 deliveries, smashing two boundaries and seven sixes at a remarkable strike rate of 200.

His fearless innings turned the match on its



head, helping his side chase down a daunting target in dramatic fashion. Hailing from Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan, a region known more for producing soldiers than cricketers, Choudhary’s journey to professional cricket has been shaped by determination and belief.

He credited his father for inspiring his cricketing dream, recalling how the ambition was set even before his birth. Starting relatively late, he began playing cricket at the age of 12 or 13 due to limited resources.

He trained for several years at the SBS Cricket

Academy in Sikar before moving to Jaipur in pursuit of better opportunities and higher level competition.

Recognising the fast evolving demands of T20 cricket, Choudhary further sharpened his skills by gaining match experience in Gurugram and Delhi.

The exposure helped him adapt to the pace and intensity required at the top level. Despite Thursday night being only his second match under lights, the youngster showed exceptional composure under pressure.



## “A Rare Chance to Test Ourselves”: India Set for Unity Cup 2026 in London

■ Blue Tigers return to UK after 24 years, face strong global opponents in four-nation tournament.

**New Delhi:** The India men's national football team is set to participate in the Unity Cup 2026, a four nation international tournament scheduled to take place in London from May 26 to 30.

The competition will feature India alongside Nigeria national football team, Jamaica national football team and Zimbabwe national football team. The matches will be hosted at The Valley, home of Charlton Athletic FC. India will take on Jamaica in the second semi final on May 27, while Nigeria will face Zimbabwe in the opening semi final on May 26. The winners will progress to the final on May 30, with the remaining teams competing for third place. This marks India's return to the United Kingdom for

international fixtures after a gap of 24 years.

The last time the team played in the UK was in 2002, when they faced Jamaica in two friendlies, suffering one defeat and securing a draw. Officials from the All India Football Federation described the tournament as a valuable opportunity for the team to gain exposure against higher ranked opponents.

The competition features sides with strong footballing pedigrees and consistent appearances on the global stage. According to the latest rankings by FIFA, India is placed 136th, while Nigeria stands at 26th, Jamaica at 71st and Zimbabwe at 130th. The disparity in rankings highlights the level of challenge awaiting the Indian side.

## “Giant-Killer Run Continues”: Ayush Shetty Stuns World No. 4 to Reach Semis

■ Young Indian shuttler scripts dream campaign as top seeds fall and India’s challenge narrows.

**New Delhi:** India’s rising badminton star Ayush Shetty produced a sensational upset to enter the semi finals of the Badminton Asia Championships, defeating third seed Jonatan Christie in straight games on Friday. The world No. 25 overcame the fourth ranked Indonesian 23 to

21, 21 to 17 in a tightly contested quarterfinal that lasted 54 minutes. It was their first meeting on the international circuit, and Shetty displayed remarkable composure to outplay one of the sport’s most accomplished names. Christie, a decorated player with gold medals

at the Asian Games and Asian Championships, along with a key role in Indonesia’s Thomas Cup triumph, was unable to match the Indian youngster’s aggressive and controlled performance. Shetty’s impressive run has been built on a series of dominant victories. He had



earlier defeated Chin Yu Jen in straight games in the pre quarterfinals and began his campaign with a commanding win over world No. 7 Li Shi Feng in the opening round.

## Sindarov Extends Dominance as Praggnanandhaa Drops Out of Contention

■ Vaishali emerges sole leader in women’s section as Candidates tournament heads for tense finish.

**New Delhi:** Uzbekistan’s Javokhir Sindarov continued his commanding run in the Candidates chess tournament, defeating India’s R Praggnanandhaa in the 10th round to stretch his lead at the top of the standings. With this victory, Sindarov moved to eight points, opening up a significant two point advantage over the field. The win marked his sixth of the tournament and his second triumph over Praggnanandhaa, who now finds himself out of title contention with four points after suffering his third loss. Sindarov’s



precise preparation and aggressive approach proved decisive, as he capitalised on a complex middle game to secure a convincing result.

Closest to the leader is Anish Giri of the Netherlands on six points, following a draw with Hikaru Nakamura. Other key matches saw Fabiano Caruana held to a draw

by Wei Yi, while Andrey Esipenko and Matthias Bluebaum also shared the points. In the women’s section, India’s R Vaishali delivered another steady performance, drawing her game to take sole lead with six points. She now sits ahead of Anna Muzychuk and Jiner Zhu, who are tied at 5.5 points. Elsewhere, Bibisara Assaubayeva secured a crucial win to join a chasing pack that includes Kateryna Lagno and Aleksandra Goryachkina, all on five points. India’s Divya Deshmukh slipped after a loss in the endgame.

## “BPL Aims to Build a Strong Sporting Culture”: Goa’s Badminton League Returns with Bigger Stage

■ Six franchise teams set to compete as corporate backing and top talent elevate the 2026 edition.

**New Delhi:** The Badminton Pro League (BPL) 2026 has been officially launched, marking the return of Goa’s premier franchise based badminton tournament with an expanded vision and growing corporate support. The second edition of the league will see six competitive teams battling for top honours, further strengthening the state’s professional badminton landscape. Organised under the Goa Badminton Association, the league will take place on May 9 and 10, 2026,



at the Indoor Stadium Campal. The tournament has secured a three year title partnership with Casino Pride, highlighting rising corporate interest in the sport. Founded by Navneet Nasnodkar, a former state player and coach, the league aims to create a structured competitive platform for players. He emphasised that the initiative is

designed to nurture talent, promote a strong sporting culture and position Goa as a recognised badminton hub. Welcoming the development, Manoj Patil noted that the involvement of leading industrial groups such as the Dempo Group would boost the ecosystem and encourage wider participation from corporate stakeholders.