



## Congress Leader Ketan Bhatikar Dies After Suspected Snake Bite

### Emerging party face declared brought dead after sudden medical emergency near Goa-Karnataka border

#### Team Goemkarponn

**PONDA:** Goa Congress leader Ketan Bhatikar passed away following a suspected snake bite incident reported from the Karmal Ghat stretch near the Goa-Karnataka border late Thursday night.

According to available details, Bhatikar was travelling towards Karnataka when he suddenly fell ill under unclear circumstances.

He was first taken to a nearby health facility and later shifted to the

Primary Health Centre in Dharbandora via 108 ambulance services for further treatment.

However, upon arrival, medical officers examined him and declared him brought dead at around 3:45 am.

Sources indicated that he showed critical symptoms, including bluish discoloration of the lips, suggesting a severe medical complication before reaching the hospital. The exact cause of death will be confirmed

CONTD TO PAGE 06...

#### CM Pramod Sawant Mourns Demise of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar

**PANAJI:** Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has expressed deep grief over the untimely passing of noted physiotherapist Dr. Ketan Bhatikar,

CONTD TO PAGE 06...

#### Yuri Alemao Mourns Demise of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar

**PANAJI:** Leader of Opposition Yuri Alemao has expressed deep sorrow over the passing of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar, describing him as a committed

CONTD TO PAGE 06...

#### Arvind Kejriwal Mourns Passing of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar

**PANAJI:** AAP National Convener Expresses Condolences, Calls His Death a Loss to Goa's Political Sphere  
AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal has

CONTD TO PAGE 06...

#### Sudin Dhavalikar Mourns Demise of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar

**PONDA:** Power Minister Sudin Dhavalikar has expressed deep grief over the sudden passing of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar, calling it a shocking and heartbreaking incident.

CONTD TO PAGE 06...

#### Vijai Sardesai Mourns Demise of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar

**FATORDA:** Fatorda MLA Vijai Sardesai has expressed deep sorrow over the untimely and tragic passing of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar,

CONTD TO PAGE 06...

#### Rajesh Verenkar Expresses Grief Over Demise of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar

**PONDA:** Congress leader Rajesh Verenkar has expressed deep sorrow over the untimely passing of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar,

CONTD TO PAGE 06...

## Bluish Lips Observed During Examination: Dr Balakrishna

#### Team Goemkarponn

**DHARBANDORA:** Congress leader Ketan Bhatikar was declared dead at the Primary Health Centre (PHC), Dharbandora, after being brought in by 108 ambulance from the Biodiversity area in Mollem around 3:30 am, officials said.

According to PHC medical officer Dr Balakrishna, the patient was examined on arrival but showed no response and was declared dead at 3:45 am.

He said Collem Police were informed immediately and the body was sent for postmortem



to ascertain the exact cause of death, including whether it was due to a snake bite or other medical reasons.

The doctor further noted that the deceased's lips had turned blue during examination, an indication that may suggest oxygen deprivation. However, he clarified that the postmortem report will determine the exact cause of death.

## Global Oil Shock and Weak Rupee Push Fuel Prices Higher in India

Global oil disruption, weak rupee, and mounting losses forced Centre and oil firms to raise petrol and diesel rates

**New Delhi:** After holding fuel prices steady for nearly ten weeks despite mounting global pressure, the Centre and state run oil companies finally increased petrol and diesel prices by Rs 3 per litre. The move comes amid soaring crude oil rates, disruptions in global supply chains, and heavy financial losses faced by oil marketing companies.

The sharp rise in international crude prices has largely been



driven by escalating tensions in the Middle East, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most crucial oil shipping routes. Concerns over supply disruptions and shipping

CONTD TO PAGE 06...

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## When Exams Collapse, So Do Young Lives

The tragic death of a 17-year-old student from Curtorim after the cancellation of NEET-UG 2026 is not merely an isolated personal tragedy. It is an indictment of a broken examination system that repeatedly fails India's students while those responsible continue to hide behind committees, probes, and bureaucratic statements.

The teenager reportedly left behind a note saying he no longer wished to appear for competitive examinations. That single sentence should shake the conscience of the country. It captures the exhaustion, fear, and hopelessness felt by lakhs of students trapped in an education culture that treats young people as statistics rather than human beings.

For nearly 23 lakh aspirants, NEET is not just another examination. It represents years of sacrifice, relentless coaching schedules, financial strain on families, and enormous emotional pressure. Many students spend two or three years preparing for this one exam, often putting their entire adolescence on hold. When such an examination is cancelled because of paper leaks and institutional failure, the consequences go far beyond inconvenience. It destroys trust, stability, and mental balance.

What makes the latest controversy even more disturbing is that this was not unforeseeable. India has witnessed repeated examination leaks, technical failures, and recruitment scams over the past few years. NEET itself faced major controversy in 2024. Yet despite assurances of reform and tighter security, another massive breach appears to have occurred in 2026, forcing authorities to cancel the examination altogether after reports that more than 100 questions matched leaked "guess papers."

At some point, the excuse of "isolated irregularities" stops being believable. What India is witnessing is systemic collapse.

The National Testing Agency was created to bring

*"For nearly 23 lakh aspirants, NEET is not just another examination. It represents years of sacrifice, relentless coaching schedules, financial strain on families, and enormous emotional pressure. Many students spend two or three years preparing for this one exam, often putting their entire adolescence on hold. When such an examination is cancelled because of paper leaks and institutional failure, the consequences go far beyond inconvenience. It destroys trust, stability, and mental balance."*

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professionalism, credibility, and efficiency to national entrance examinations. Instead, its credibility now stands severely damaged. Every leak exposes not just weak systems, but also the possibility of organised networks thriving within or around examination structures. Honest students continue to suffer while coaching mafias, middlemen, and criminal rackets exploit desperation for profit. The official response has followed a depressingly familiar script: cancellation, CBI inquiry, promises of transparency, and assurances that students need not pay fresh fees. But can repeated

investigations alone restore public confidence? More importantly, who is being held accountable for institutional negligence?

The emotional burden carried by students is rarely acknowledged seriously enough. In India's hyper-competitive education ecosystem, failure is often internalised as personal inadequacy, even when the system itself is responsible. Students already battle anxiety, depression, social pressure, and fear of disappointing their families. When institutions collapse around them, many feel powerless and abandoned.

Social media reactions following the cancellation reflected precisely this anger and despair. Many students questioned how a country capable of conducting massive elections and building advanced digital infrastructure repeatedly fails to conduct fair examinations. Others openly demanded structural reforms instead of temporary damage control.

The larger problem lies in the dangerous culture India has built around entrance examinations. One exam increasingly determines identity, career, social mobility, and self-worth. This creates enormous psychological pressure and also fuels a parallel economy of leaks, cheating networks, and commercial exploitation. Until admissions become more diversified and less singularly dependent on one high stakes test, such crises will continue.

The Curtorim tragedy should not be reduced to another passing headline. It must become a moment of reckoning. India urgently needs examination reforms that prioritise transparency, decentralised safeguards, technological security, and mental health support for students. Equally important is fixing accountability. When systems fail at this scale, consequences cannot stop at press conferences.

A nation that asks its youth to compete relentlessly owes them at least one thing in return: a fair system they can trust. Right now, that trust stands shattered.

### OPED

## Satish Dhond: The Quiet Catalyst Who Delivers

Vaman S Sakhalkar

In Indian politics, where visibility often matters more than value and noise frequently overshadows substance, Satish Dhond represents a rare and increasingly uncommon breed — the quiet organiser who prefers results over recognition. A former RSS pracharak from Bicholim, Goa, Dhond has spent decades building a reputation not through speeches or self-promotion, but through relentless organisational work, discipline, and an ability to strengthen political structures from the ground up.

Those who have worked closely with him often describe him as a man of simple habits, understated personality, and exceptional strategic clarity. He is not a leader who dominates headlines or television debates. Instead, his politics has always revolved around the basics that ultimately decide electoral outcomes: booth management, cadre training, community outreach, voter engagement, and meticulous long-term planning. In many ways, Dhond embodies the classic Sangh style of politics — patient, methodical, and deeply rooted in grassroots mobilisation. His role in the BJP's rise in Goa remains one of the defining chapters of his organisational career. Political observers widely regard him as one of the important architects behind the party's landmark 2012 Assembly election victory that brought the BJP to power in the state. At a time when the party was attempting to expand beyond its traditional support base, Dhond played a key role in strengthening the organisation at the local level and widening its social outreach across communities. His emphasis on disciplined booth-level structures and consistent engagement helped convert organisational groundwork into electoral success. Even after the initial breakthrough, Dhond continued to contribute quietly to consolidating the party's position in Goa. During politically challenging periods, his organisational approach ensured that the BJP's grassroots machinery remained active and connected. Unlike leaders who focus only on election seasons, Dhond has always believed in sustained groundwork between elections, a factor that often determines whether political gains endure or fade away. When the BJP later assigned him the demanding responsibility of West Bengal, many within political circles viewed it as one of the toughest organisational assignments in the country. Bengal has long been a politically volatile and fiercely contested landscape, where building a durable party structure requires enormous patience and persistence. Yet Dhond approached the task without hesitation or fanfare. Applying the same low-profile but systematic style that had worked in Goa, he focused on strengthening local networks, energising cadre structures, coordinating hyper-local strategies, and expanding the party's organisational reach in difficult regions. While political outcomes in Bengal continue to evolve, the BJP's improved performance and significant gains in the 2026 elections are also seen as reflecting years of sustained organisational investment and groundwork. Today, with his experience spanning both Goa and Bengal, Satish Dhond's political résumé carries considerable weight within organisational circles. Speculation about a possible return to Goa naturally generates interest, particularly at a time when experienced strategists remain crucial for future political battles. Like in any state unit, adapting to local leadership dynamics will always present challenges. Yet those familiar with Dhond's working style point out that he has consistently placed the party's larger interests above personal equations or individual ambition. In an era dominated by personality-driven politics and instant stardom, Satish Dhond stands out as a reminder that silent, sustained contribution still matters. Leaders may command attention, but it is organisers like him who often build the foundations on which political victories ultimately rest.

# Goa Sets Up Taluka-Level SITs To Examine Diversion Of Reserved Forest Land

■ Move Follows Supreme Court Order To Audit Encroachments, Restore Forest Areas Or Recover Land Value

**Team Goemkarponn**

**PANAJI:** The Goa government has established Special Investigation Teams (SITs) in every taluka to probe cases involving reserved forest land that may have been diverted for non-forestry purposes while remaining recorded under the Revenue Department.

The decision comes in the wake of a Supreme Court directive asking all States and Union Territories to examine instances where forest land was allegedly allotted to private individuals, organisations or institutions for non-forest use, and to complete corrective action within a stipulated timeframe.

According to an official notification issued by the



Revenue Department, the Deputy Collector of each taluka will serve as the head of the respective SIT. The panel will also include the Assistant Conservator of Forests, a representative from the Directorate of Settlement and Land Records (DSLRL), the local Talathi, and other officials as required depending on the case.

Government sources indicated that a preliminary joint assessment conducted by the district administration along with the Forest Department has already flagged several cases that warrant detailed investigation.

The SITs have been mandated to verify whether reserved forest land recorded in revenue

records was allocated or used for non-forest purposes by private parties or institutions. They will also prepare a detailed inventory of such parcels, including information on location, extent, and current status of use.

As part of their mandate, the teams will recommend measures to reclaim such land and ensure its transfer back to the Forest Department. In cases where recovery is not feasible due to overriding public interest considerations, the SITs will assess the market value of the land and suggest recovery of compensation from the beneficiaries, with the proceeds earmarked for forest conservation and development activities.

# Love setback, depression suspected behind BITS Pilani Goa scholar's suicide

■ "I am very sorry for taking this decision," wrote Arjun Sabu before suicide

**Team Goemkarponn**

**SANCOALE:** The post-mortem examination of 26-year-old BITS Pilani Goa PhD scholar Arjun Sabu, who was found dead at a rented flat near the campus on Wednesday, has confirmed death due to hanging, with investigators suspecting that depression following a failed relationship may have driven him to take the extreme step. Police sources said a suicide note recovered from the room stated that no one should be held responsible for his death, while Arjun allegedly wrote, "I am very sorry for taking this decision," before ending his life. The police have ruled out any foul play in the case.

Police sources informed that the post-mortem procedure was completed on Thursday and the body was later handed over to the family members for final rites, Kerala.

Arjun Sabu, a native of Kerala and a second-year PhD scholar attached to the BITS Pilani Goa campus, was found dead after allegedly dying by suicide at the rented accommodation located near the institute premises. The incident



had once again raised concerns over a series of suicides linked to students associated with the institute.

Sources connected to the investigation stated that Sabu had allegedly been undergoing depression following the end of a long-term relationship. The relationship reportedly ended around a year ago after his girlfriend moved to a European country.

Investigators had also recovered a one-page suicide note from the room. According to sources, Sabu stated in the note that no one should be held responsible for his death and expressed regret over taking the extreme step.

"I am very sorry for the decision to commit suicide, fed up of life. No one should be held responsible for my death" a part of the suicide note said Sabu was staying in Goa since January 2025 and is now survived by his parents and a married sister staying abroad.

Police have completed the inquest proceedings and further formalities in connection with the case.

# Crime Branch Files Two Chargesheets in Curchorem Sex Scandal; Third Likely Soon

**Team Goemkarponn**

**CURCHOREM:** The Crime Branch (CB) has submitted two separate chargesheets against Soham Naik, son of a BJP-linked councillor, in the Curchorem sexual assault case, while a third chargesheet linked to the earliest FIR is expected shortly, sources said.

Investigators

have primarily relied on forensic findings, including recovered mobile data, photographs and allegedly restored deleted videos retrieved during examination at the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL), Verna.

In one of the cases, a detailed 158-page report has been placed before the Juvenile Justice Board

(JJB), listing 19 witnesses. Since both the accused and the survivor were minors at the time of the alleged incident, the matter has been submitted in juvenile proceedings rather than a regular criminal court format, officials indicated. According to sources, the victim, then a Class X student, reportedly came into contact with the

**Forensic Evidence, Deleted Digital Data and Juvenile Board Proceedings Form Key Basis of Investigation**

accused through social media. The interaction allegedly developed into a friendship, following which she was sexually exploited and the act was purportedly recorded.

Medical findings, according to investigators, have supported allegations of sexual assault and form a significant part of the evidence on record.

# Goa Govt Bans Official Foreign Trips Funded By State

■ All Previously Approved Overseas Visits Of Public Servants Cancelled With Immediate Effect

**Team Goemkarponn**

**PANAJI:** The Goa government has imposed an immediate ban on all official foreign visits by public servants that are fully or partially funded through the state exchequer.

The decision comes in the wake of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent appeal urging austerity measures and prudent expenditure.

An Office Memorandum issued



on Thursday by Under Secretary Finance Naresh Gaude stated that no government-funded foreign travel by public servants will be permitted until further orders.

The government has also withdrawn all permissions that had already been granted for such overseas visits.

# Goa Govt Rolls Out Aid Scheme For Financially Weak C-Class Municipal Councils

■ Valpoi, Sanguem And Pernem Municipalities To Receive Salary And Pension Assistance For Employees And Retirees

**Team Goemkarponn**

**PANAJI:** In a significant support measure for financially struggling civic bodies, the Directorate of Urban Development has introduced a new scheme to provide salary and pension assistance to employees and retired staff of Goa's C-class municipal councils.

The scheme, titled "Grant of Financial Assistance to

Economically Weaker 'C' Class Municipal Councils for Strengthening the Administration Scheme, 2026", has been implemented with immediate effect and will remain operational for the next five years.

The initiative covers the State's three C-class municipalities — Valpoi, Sanguem and Pernem — which have been facing persistent financial constraints.

Under the scheme, the State government will provide annual grants of up to Rs 50 lakh to help municipal councils pay employee salaries. An additional grant of up to Rs 25 lakh per year will be provided towards pension payments for retired staff members. Officials said the move is intended to reduce the disparity between employees working in smaller municipalities and those

employed in financially stronger A and B-class councils.

The government has also kept provisions for additional financial assistance in exceptional situations. Such support may be extended after examining the financial condition of the councils, especially when they are unable to manage administrative expenses because of insufficient funds.

## 152 Containers Of Suspected Animal Fat Seized In Margao; One Held

■ DSPCA complaint leads to registration of FIR under BNS and Food Safety laws for illegal transport and suspected use in food adulteration

Team Goemkarponn

**MARGAO:** Margao Town Police have registered an FIR against a Karnataka native after 152 containers containing suspected animal fat/tallow were allegedly found being transported illegally at Khareband, Margao.

According to police, the case was registered on May 14, 2026 at 7:52 pm following a written complaint filed by Shri Raj Pratik from the Office of DSPCA, South Goa. The complaint stated that at around 1 pm on the same day, the accused, identified as Mohammed



Shabbir Bellary (40), a native of Hubli, Karnataka, was found transporting 152 containers suspected to contain animal fat in a Bolero Pick-Up bearing

registration number KA-25-B-3395.

Police said the accused allegedly failed to produce a valid permit for transporting

the consignment. The complaint further alleged that the suspected animal fat was obtained through illegal killing of animals and was intended for use in adulteration and sale of noxious food substances.

Margao Town Police registered FIR No. 51/2026 under Sections 325, 274 and 275 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, along with Sections 26, 27, 59 and 63 of the Food Safety and Standards Act (FSSA), 2006. Further investigation is being carried out by PSI Shubham Gaunkar of Margao Town Police Station.

## Wrong-Side Aactiva Rider Causes Serious Crash At Sancoale

■ One biker suffers grievous injuries after scooter allegedly ridden rashly on wrong side collides with KTM Duke at Queenynagar

Team Goemkarponn

**VERNA:** Verna Police have registered a case against an Aactiva scooter rider for allegedly riding in a rash and negligent manner and causing a serious road accident at Queenynagar, Sancoale.

As per the complaint filed by Jeelani Negaloor of Birla, Sancoale, the accident occurred on March 30, 2026 at around 10:25 pm. The accused, identified as Sanjiv Kumar, resident of Sancoale and native of Auraiya, Uttar Pradesh, was allegedly riding the Aactiva scooter on the wrong side of the



road when he collided head-on with an oncoming KTM Duke motorcycle.

The crash reportedly left KTM rider Kiran Jadhav of Birla, Sancoale with grievous injuries, while pillion rider Basuraj Dewnal of Zuarinagar, Sancoale sustained minor injuries.

Further investigation in the case is being carried out by ASI Sudhakar Jadhav of Verna Police Station.

## Three Injured In Road Crash Involving Truck, Car And Ambulance At Cacora

■ Collision reported in Curchorem area; locals cite poor road condition and ongoing work as possible cause

Team Goemkarponn

**CACORA:** Three people were injured after a truck, a car, and an ambulance were involved in a collision at Cacora in Curchorem.

The accident reportedly took place on Friday, with the impact leaving the vehicles damaged and causing injuries to occupants. Locals in the area have alleged that



the mishap may have been triggered due to uneven road conditions and ongoing civil works at the site. Police reached the spot and conducted a panchnama as part of the initial investigation.

## Ponda Man Suffers Grievous Injury After Assault At Sanguem

■ Accused allegedly abused complainant and assaulted him with fist blow during late-night altercation at Shelpe

Team Goemkarponn

**SANGUEM:** Sanguem Police have registered a case against a Curchorem resident for allegedly assaulting a man and causing grievous injuries during an altercation at Shelpe, Sanguem.

According to the complaint filed by Rajesh Porwal, resident of Upper Bazar, Ponda,



the incident took place on May 13, 2026 at around 2 am. The

accused, identified as Yash Naik of Camral, Curchorem, allegedly

abused the complainant and his friends using filthy language before assaulting Porwal with a fist blow on his nose.

Police said the complainant sustained grievous injuries to his nose in the assault.

Further investigation in the case is being conducted by Pradhyumna Keny of Sanguem Police Station.

## Navelim Man Booked For Rape And Cheating On Pretext Of Marriage

■ Woman alleges repeated sexual assault and cheating of Rs 8 lakh between 2021 and 2026

Team Goemkarponn

**MARGAO:** Margao Town Police have registered a case against a Navelim resident following allegations of repeated sexual assault and cheating on the false promise of marriage.

According to the complaint filed by a lady complainant, the accused identified as Sakib Munaf Tandoor, resident of Mandopa Road, Navelim,



allegedly subjected her to forcible sexual intercourse

on multiple occasions from June 2021 at locations including Mandopa, Navelim and Mumbai till 2026.

The complainant further alleged that the accused induced her to part with Rs 8 lakh on the pretext of marriage and later cheated her.

Further investigation in the case is being carried out by PSI Anushka Parab of Margao Town Police Station.

## Man Held With Suspected Ganja Worth Rs 40,000 At Cavelossim

■ Colva Police seize 400 grams of suspected contraband during raid at Betty Waddo

Team Goemkarponn

**COLVA:** Colva Police have arrested a Cavelossim resident after allegedly finding him in possession of suspected ganja worth approximately Rs 40,000.

According to the state complaint filed by PSI Nikhil Khajnekar of Colva Police Station, the accused identified as Abhishak Dundappanavar, resident of Tamborim, Cavelossim, was caught



red-handed on May 13, 2026 between 4 pm and 5 pm at Betty Waddo, Cavelossim.

Police said the accused was found possessing fruiting and flowering tops-like

substance suspected to be ganja weighing around 400 grams.

Further investigation in the case is being carried out by PSI Varshda Naik Dessai of Colva Police Station.

## Hindu Ekta Manch Demands Declaration Of 16 May As 'Black Day' In Goa Over Inquisition History

■ Organisation calls for recognition of Goa Inquisition history, inclusion in textbooks, museum setup, and public awareness initiatives

**Team Goemkarponn**

**PANAJI:** Hindu Ekta Manch, Goa has demanded that the Goa Government officially declare 16 May as a "Black Day" in Goa, stating that the date marks the beginning of one of the most painful chapters in the state's history.

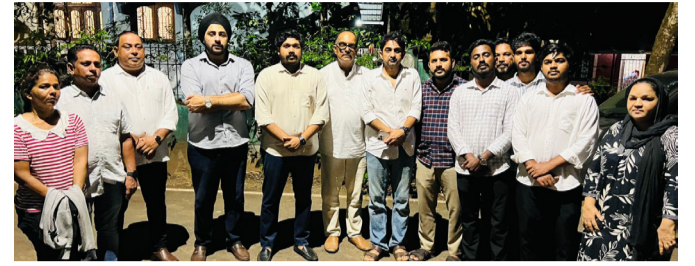
The organisation said that on 16 May 1546,



Francis Xavier wrote a letter to King John III of Portugal requesting the establishment of the Inquisition in Goa, and appealed to citizens to support the demand. The

statement was made during a press conference held at Azad Maidan in Panaji on 13th May, where office bearers including Nitin Phaldesai, Satyavijay Naik, Jayesh Thali, Sujan

Naik, Abhay Samant, and Dinin Pednekar were present. The organisation claimed that historical records and research indicate that thousands of Hindus faced religious persecution during the Goa Inquisition period, alleging that temples were destroyed, religious practices were restricted, and forced conversions were carried out.



## Youth Congress Delegation Visits Family Of 17-Year-Old Student After Tragic Death

■ Leaders express condolences and call for focus on student mental health and exam stress

**Team Goemkarponn**

**NESSAI:** A delegation of the Goa Pradesh Youth Congress Committee (GPYC), along with members of the South Goa District Committee and NSUI Goa, visited the family of a 17-year-old student who reportedly died by suicide due to exam-related stress.

The delegation met the bereaved family, expressed their heartfelt condolences, and stood in solidarity during the difficult time. Leaders highlighted that the incident reflects the

growing concern over mental health issues among students and the pressure associated with academics. They also prayed for strength for the grieving family and peace for the departed soul.

The delegation included GPYC President Archit Naik, GPYC Incharge Swapnil Patil and Hargun Singh, DCC President Assiz Noronha, GPYC General Secretary Naushad Chakudhari, Ex-DCC President Sivio Dsilva, Block President Francis, NSUI General Secretary Kumar Gavali, and Samir Sawar.

## CM Pramod Sawant Chairs SLBC Meeting, Reviews Banking And Financial Inclusion Progress

■ Focus on MSMEs, digital banking, green finance and welfare scheme enrolments

**Team Goemkarponn**

**PANAJI:** Chief Minister Dr Pramod Sawant addressed the 133rd State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC) meeting in Panaji, where key issues related to

strengthening Goa's banking sector, financial inclusion, digital banking, and sustainable economic growth were discussed.

The Chief Minister highlighted the progress under social security schemes, noting that



Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) enrolments have reached 4.17 lakh beneficiaries, while

Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) enrolments have crossed 12.12 lakh beneficiaries in the State.



## Nagpur–Madgaon Bi-Weekly Special Train Regularised As Express Service

■ KRCL announces conversion of special train into regular bi-weekly express from May 2026

**Team Goemkarponn**

**PANAJI:** Konkan Railway Corporation Limited (KRCL) has announced the regularisation of Train No. 01139/01140 Nagpur Jn.–Madgaon Jn.–Nagpur Jn. Bi-Weekly Special into a regular Bi-Weekly Express service.

The train will now operate as Train No. 11203/11204 Nagpur Jn.–Madgaon Jn.–Nagpur Jn. Bi-Weekly Express, with effect from May 16, 2026 from Nagpur Junction and May 17, 2026 from Madgaon Junction.

Train No. 11203 will depart Nagpur Junction at 15:05 hrs every Wednesday and Saturday, reaching Madgaon Junction at 17:45 hrs the next day. Similarly, Train No. 11204 will depart Madgaon Junction at 20:00 hrs every Thursday and Sunday, arriving at Nagpur Junction at 21:25 hrs the following day.

The train will halt at major stations including Wardha, Bhusaval, Nashik Road, Kalyan, Panvel, Roha, Ratnagiri, Kankavli, Kudal, Sawantwadi Road, Thivim and Karmali, among others.

## Smoke billows out of locked house near Noorani Masjid in New Vaddem, fire averted

**Team Goemkarponn**

**VADDEM:** Panic gripped residents near Noorani Masjid at New Vaddem on Thursday morning after huge smoke was seen billowing out from a locked residential house, prompting locals to alert patrolling police personnel moving through the area.

According to available



information, beat police personnel who were passing from the locality

were approached by residents after thick smoke was noticed

coming from inside the closed house. Suspecting a fire mishap, the police immediately rushed to the spot and forcibly opened the door of the house to prevent the blaze from spreading further.

The police, along with local residents, began controlling the fire by pouring water through buckets before the arrival of fire personnel.

## Archdiocese Of Goa And Daman Announces Major Clergy Transfers For 2026-27

■ Archbishop-Patriarch Filipe Neri Ferrão releases wide-ranging pastoral appointments, including parish priests, chaplains, and seminary roles

**Team Goemkarponn**

**PANAJI:** The Archbishop-Patriarch of Goa and Daman, His Eminence Filipe Neri Ferrão, has announced a series of appointments and transfers of clergy for the pastoral year 2026-27 across the archdiocese.

The appointments



include parish priests, parochial administrators, chaplains, assistants to parish priests, staff assignments, and other key responsibilities in various parishes and

institutions across Goa, Daman, and neighbouring regions. Several priests have been newly appointed as parish priests in different parishes including Olaulim, Aquem, Cavellissim, Velim, Mapusa, Aldona, Margão, Santa Cruz, Nerul, Panjim, and other locations. Multiple clergy members

have also been assigned chaplaincies, seminary duties, and administrative roles in institutions such as Rachol Seminary, Saligão Seminary, and diocesan centres. The archdiocese has also relieved several priests from their current responsibilities as part of the routine pastoral restructuring.

# Two-day musical extravaganza set to light up Dabolim on May 16-17

**Dabolim:** The Dabolim Musical Waves will be held at Joggers Park, Chicalim on May 16-17 with live entertainment, culinary delights and unlimited music making it, a complete family entertainment destination.

The two-day musical extravaganza organized by the state's Department of Tourism will begin on the evening of May 16 with performances by renowned bands including Abhanga Repost, KK Sonic, The 7 Notes, and Kutumb Bollywood Band, alongside vibrant Goan folk performances and a spectacular fashion show

by Verma D Mello.

Speaking ahead of the festival, Hon'ble Minister for Tourism, Rohan A. Khaunte, said, "The Department of Tourism continues to focus on creating vibrant tourism experiences that celebrate Goa's culture, music, and community. Dabolim Musical Wave – Musical Festival is envisioned as a platform that brings together local talent, contemporary entertainment, and community participation. Through such festivals, we aim to enhance visitor experiences and create greater opportunities

for local artists and businesses."

Hon'ble Minister for Transport, Mauvin Godinho, said, "Dabolim Musical Waves will play an important role in enhancing Goa's cultural and tourism ecosystem while also supporting local engagement and economic activity. This Festival will bring Dabolim alive with two days of amazing performances and celebrations. We are thrilled to welcome everyone to Joggers Park, Chicalim – Dabolim for a spectacular weekend celebrating music and entertainment"

GTDC Chairman, Kedar J. Naik, added, "This festival is envisioned as a celebration of Goa's dynamic cultural spirit and growing entertainment landscape. Through this festival, we aim to create memorable experiences for both locals and tourists while showcasing the energy that defines the coastal state."

The Department of Tourism has extended an invitation to everyone to be a part of this grand celebration and experience an unforgettable weekend of music, culture, entertainment and make it a grand success

Incredible India  
Department of Tourism  
Government of Goa

2 Days of Musical Extravaganza

**DABOLIM MUSICAL WAVES 2026**

16th Saturday  
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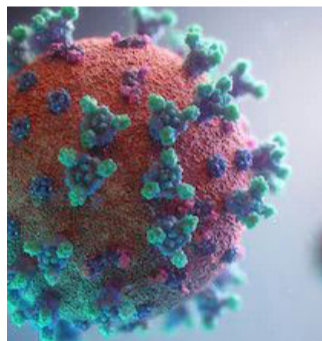
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...CONTD FROM PAGE 01

## WHO Estimates 22.1 Million Excess Deaths Linked To Covid Pandemic Worldwide

Report Highlights Massive Global Health Impact And Major Gaps In Mortality Data Systems

**New Delhi:** A new report by the World Health Organization has estimated that nearly 22.1 million excess deaths worldwide were linked to the Covid-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2023, revealing the broader human cost of the global health crisis beyond officially reported Covid fatalities.



revealed that only around one third of countries currently meet WHO standards for high quality mortality reporting. A significant number of nations either maintain low quality data systems or have no dependable death registration mechanisms in place.

According to the report, excess deaths refer to the number of fatalities recorded above what would normally be expected during a particular period. These deaths include not only direct Covid infections but also indirect fatalities caused by overwhelmed healthcare systems, delayed medical treatment, reduced emergency care access and disruptions in routine health services.

The WHO analysis found that many countries lacked reliable mortality reporting systems during the pandemic years, making it difficult to accurately track the full scale of deaths. By the end of 2025, only 18 percent of countries were submitting mortality data to the WHO within a year, while nearly one third had never reported detailed cause of death data at all.

The report further

Out of an estimated 61 million deaths recorded globally in 2023, only about one third included proper cause of death information. Even fewer were supported by meaningful International Classification of Diseases coded data, highlighting serious gaps in global health surveillance.

Health experts say the actual pandemic toll was likely far higher than official Covid death figures reported by several countries. Limited testing capacity, deaths occurring outside hospitals and inconsistent reporting standards contributed to undercounting during peak waves of infection.

# Congress Leader Ketan Bhatikar Dies After Suspected Snake Bite

only after the postmortem report. Bhatikar, a physiotherapist by profession, had recently gained prominence within the Congress party during preparations for the now-cancelled Ponda Assembly bypoll.

His sudden demise has sent shockwaves through political circles in Goa, with leaders and supporters expressing grief and condolences.

### Rajesh Verenkar Expresses Grief Over Demise of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar

recalling him as a childhood friend who was always dedicated to helping people, particularly during medical emergencies. He said the loss marks one of the saddest moments of his life and extended heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family. Verenkar also prayed for strength and courage for the family to cope with the difficult time.

## Global Oil Shock and Weak Rupee Push Fuel Prices Higher in India

delays pushed crude oil prices from around 69 dollars per barrel to nearly 114 dollars per barrel within weeks. India, which imports nearly 85 percent of its crude oil requirements, has been directly affected by the surge. At the same time, the Indian rupee weakened to record lows against the US dollar, making imports even more

### CM Pramod Sawant Mourns Demise of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar

describing his death as a major loss to the medical fraternity. Extending condolences, the Chief Minister said Dr. Bhatikar's contribution to healthcare will be remembered and conveyed sympathies to the bereaved family and friends. He prayed for peace to the departed soul.

### Yuri Alemao Mourns Demise of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar

public servant whose contribution will be long remembered. Extending condolences, he conveyed sympathies to the bereaved family and prayed for peace to the departed soul during this difficult time.

### Vijai Sardesai Mourns Demise of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar

describing it as a great loss. He conveyed heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and loved ones, praying for peace to the departed soul and wishing that his atma attains Sadgati. He concluded with "Om Shanti."

### Sudin Dhavalikar Mourns Demise of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar

He recalled Dr. Bhatikar as a helpful individual who regularly attended the Friday Abhishek at Mahalaxmi temple and was known for his supportive nature towards people.

Dhavalikar also conveyed condolences to the bereaved family and prayed for strength for them to cope with the tragic loss during this difficult time.

### Arvind Kejriwal Mourns Passing of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar

expressed shock and grief over the sudden demise of Dr. Ketan Bhatikar, describing him as a well-known and prominent leader from Goa. Extending condolences, Kejriwal conveyed sympathies to the bereaved family, supporters, and well-wishers, and prayed for peace to the departed soul. He offered his respects, saying "Om Shanti" in remembrance of the late leader.

# “Time for Economic Patriotism”: BJP Defends Fuel Price Hike Amid Opposition Attack

■ Congress links petrol and diesel price increase to post election timing as Centre cites global oil crisis

**New Delhi:** The latest increase in petrol and diesel prices has triggered a sharp political confrontation between the BJP and the Congress, with the ruling party defending the move as necessary amid global energy disruptions while the opposition accused the Centre of burdening citizens after state elections.

Fuel prices were raised across major cities after remaining unchanged for several weeks. In Delhi, petrol now costs Rs 97.77 per litre while diesel has risen to Rs 90.67. Similar



hikes were recorded in Mumbai and Chennai, with prices varying across states due to local taxes.

The Congress criticised the timing of the decision, pointing out that the increase came shortly after assembly elections

concluded in several states. The party argued that higher fuel prices would worsen inflation and place additional pressure on household expenses and economic growth.

The BJP, however, maintained that the

increase was modest compared to fuel price spikes witnessed globally following disruptions linked to the Strait of Hormuz crisis and broader tensions in West Asia.

BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said India had limited the fuel price rise despite international crude oil prices crossing the 100 dollar per barrel mark. He accused the Congress of politicising a global crisis and called for “economic patriotism” during a period of international uncertainty.

## Amid Iran War and Energy Concerns, Modi Begins Strategic Five Nation Tour

■ Prime Minister’s visits to UAE and Europe to focus on energy security, technology partnerships, trade and supply chain

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi has begun a five nation diplomatic tour starting with the United Arab Emirates before heading to the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, and Italy, with energy security, technology cooperation, and strategic economic

partnerships expected to dominate discussions.

The visit comes at a time when tensions linked to the Iran conflict and disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz continue to affect global oil markets and supply chains. As one of the world’s largest energy importers, India is

seeking to strengthen long term partnerships while diversifying trade and technology cooperation across regions.

Modi’s first stop in the UAE will include talks with UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Energy cooperation is expected to



remain a key focus, with discussions likely around liquefied petroleum gas agreements and strategic petroleum reserves.



## “No Compromise With Students’ Future”: NEET UG to Go Fully Computer Based From 2027

■ Centre announces major reforms after paper leak forces cancellation of NEET UG 2026

**New Delhi:** The Centre has announced a major overhaul of the NEET UG examination system, confirming that the country’s largest medical entrance test will shift entirely to a computer based format from next year. The decision comes in the wake of the NEET UG 2026 paper leak controversy that led to the cancellation of the examination earlier this month.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said the government remains committed to maintaining fairness and transparency in the examination process and will continue to follow a strict zero tolerance policy against malpractice.

NEET UG 2026 was conducted on May 3, but concerns surfaced a few days later over the circulation of a suspected “guess paper.” Following complaints and

investigations by central agencies, authorities confirmed that the examination paper had indeed been leaked. The government then decided to cancel the test on May 12.

A re examination has now been scheduled for June 21, while admit cards will be issued by June 14. The government also announced that students will not have to pay any examination fee for the fresh test and that previously paid fees will be refunded.

Pradhan stated that the move towards a fully computer based examination system is aimed at strengthening security and reducing the possibility of future leaks. He acknowledged that despite earlier reforms and recommendations made by the Radhakrishnan Committee, weaknesses still existed in the examination chain.

## “The ₹3 Shock Has Already Arrived”: Rahul Gandhi Slams Centre Over Fuel Price Increase

■ Opposition Targets Government As Petrol, Diesel And CNG Prices Rise Across India

**New Delhi:** Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday criticised the Narendra Modi led central government following the latest hike in fuel prices, saying ordinary citizens were being forced to bear the consequences of the government’s decisions.

The sharp reaction from the Congress leader came after petrol prices were increased by Rs 3.14 per litre and diesel by Rs 3.11 per litre amid rising international crude



oil prices and supply disruptions linked to tensions in West Asia. CNG prices were also raised by Rs 2 in several regions, adding to concerns over inflation and rising household expenses.

## “Unacceptable”: India Condemns Attack on Indian Flagged Vessel Near Oman

All 14 crew members rescued safely after ship catches fire and sinks off Oman coast

**New Delhi:** India has strongly condemned an attack on an Indian flagged commercial vessel off the coast of Oman, describing the incident as “unacceptable” amid rising security concerns in the Strait of Hormuz region. The Ministry of External Affairs confirmed that all 14 crew members aboard the vessel were rescued safely after the ship came under attack on Wednesday. The identity of those responsible for the strike has not yet been established.

## India Calls for Diplomacy and Maritime Stability During BRICS Foreign Ministers’ Meet

■ Jaishankar urges BRICS nations to safeguard maritime trade and pursue diplomacy amid rising Middle East tensions

**New Delhi:** India has raised strong concerns over the escalating tensions in the Middle East and their impact on global energy routes, calling on BRICS nations to work together in addressing growing geopolitical and economic uncertainty. Speaking at the BRICS foreign ministers’ meeting, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar stressed the importance of protecting maritime stability in key international waterways, particularly the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea. Addressing



representatives including Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi and UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Khalifa Shaheen Al Marar, Jaishankar said peace and stability must be pursued collectively and consistently.

He highlighted that uninterrupted maritime movement through strategic waterways remains essential for the global economy and warned against disruptions that could impact international trade and energy supplies.

# “You Don’t Become A Superstar Without Performances”: Rahul Dravid’s Comments Spark Debate In Indian Cricket

■ Former India Coach Backs Need For Icons While Reflecting On Team Transition And Test Cricket Challenges

**New Delhi:** Former India head coach Rahul Dravid has reignited debate around “superstar culture” in Indian cricket after defending the importance of iconic players in inspiring future generations. His remarks come at a time when current head coach Gautam Gambhir has repeatedly spoken about reducing the influence of individual stardom within the national team setup.

Speaking on a cricket podcast, Dravid said every sport requires heroes and legends who capture the imagination of fans through



consistent performances and contributions to team success. He stressed that becoming a superstar in a country like India is not easy due to the immense scrutiny and pressure players face throughout



their careers. According to Dravid, players earn legendary status only after proving themselves repeatedly on the field and helping their teams achieve success. He added that such personalities play

a major role in growing the sport and motivating younger athletes to dream bigger.

The former coach also reflected on India’s recent struggles in Test cricket, admitting that the team is still adjusting to the retirement of experienced players like Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and Ravichandran Ashwin. He acknowledged that replacing cricketers of such stature is never easy and said the transition period may take time before the team regains consistency in the longer format.

# “The Last Two Weeks Were Like Torture”: Nikhat Zareen Opens Up On Selection Chaos

■ Star Boxer Says Athletes Suffered Amid BFI And SAI Dispute Over Commonwealth And Asian Games Trials

**New Delhi:** Two time world champion Nikhat Zareen has expressed frustration over the confusion surrounding India’s boxing selection process, describing the past two weeks as “torture” for athletes caught in the middle of the administrative dispute between the Boxing Federation of India and the Sports Authority of India.

The controversy began after SAI objected to the Boxing Federation’s proposed assessment based selection system following complaints from several boxers. The assessment camp, which was meant to help select squads for this year’s Commonwealth Games and Asian Games, was eventually suspended midway, forcing the federation to return to the traditional trial based format.

Nikhat said the constant changes in schedules, fitness evaluations and selection criteria created enormous pressure on athletes who were already preparing intensely for the upcoming events. According to her, boxers were repeatedly informed about revised



plans and were expected to maintain strict weight targets while continuing uninterrupted training.

She revealed that athletes had initially been told the national camp would begin on April 25, but delays in approval pushed the schedule further. Boxers were later informed that performance assessments, including physical tests, strength tests and sparring sessions, would determine selection points. However, after weeks of preparation, the entire assessment system was scrapped and the earlier scores were discarded.

Nikhat admitted the uncertainty was physically exhausting and mentally draining, especially since many athletes continued training despite injuries and fatigue to avoid losing points in the proposed system.



# Tilak Varma’s Blazing Knock Throws IPL Playoff Race Wide Open

■ Mumbai Indians Beat Punjab Kings As CSK And Rajasthan Royals Get Major Qualification Boost

**New Delhi:** The IPL 2026 playoff battle has intensified dramatically after Mumbai Indians defeated Punjab Kings in a high scoring clash in Dharamsala, dealing a major blow to Punjab’s qualification hopes.

Punjab Kings, who

were once among the frontrunners this season, have now suffered five consecutive defeats and remain fourth on the points table with 13 points from 12 matches. At the top, Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Gujarat Titans are

level on 16 points from 12 games each, while Sunrisers Hyderabad sit third with 14 points.

The latest result has opened a massive opportunity for Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals, both of whom have 12

points from 11 matches and now have a strong chance to break into the top four with games in hand. Even Kolkata Knight Riders and Delhi Capitals remain mathematically alive in the playoff race despite inconsistent campaigns.

# Saxtti UTTC Set to Light Up Goa’s Table Tennis Arena

■ Inaugural team championship in Margao to feature veterans, state stars, and emerging talent

## Team Goemkarponn

**Panaji:** Goa’s table tennis community is set for an exciting new chapter as the inaugural Saxtti UTTC (Ultimate Table Tennis Team Championship) takes place on May 17, 2026, at Gomant Vidhya Niketan in Margao. Organised by the Saxtti Sports and Cultural Club, the tournament promises a lively mix of competition, teamwork, and sporting spirit.

The championship will introduce a dynamic team

based format featuring some of Goa’s most experienced paddlers alongside current state players, former champions, and rising young talent. Eight teams will compete in the event, namely Smash and Dash, Nivian Vipers, Kiran Titans, Nopex Ninjas, Goa Superkings, Sameer Spinners, GCC Paddlers, and Uniqlo Warriors. With several leading players representing the teams, spectators can expect closely fought matches and high intensity action throughout the tournament.



# Goa’s Young Shuttlers Exit Early as National Ranking Event Heats Up in Navelim

■ Amaira Dhumatkar and Goa’s top contenders set to begin main draw campaign from May 15

## Team Goemkarponn

**Panaji:** Goa’s challenge faced another difficult day at the Yonex Sunrise Under 13 National Ranking Badminton Tournament at the Manohar Parrikar Indoor Stadium in Navelim, with several local players bowing out during the qualification rounds.

Varun Sahakari’s campaign ended in Qualification Round 2 after he lost 8-15, 12-15 to Telangana’s Nhaihik T. Shourya Sinari also exited the tournament following a 15-7, 15-11 defeat against Kerala’s Hadhi



Hamdhan. Suven Sawant was another Goan player to fall short, going down 15-6, 15-10 to Karnataka’s Abraham Menezes.

In the girls’ doubles competition, Goa’s



Yashika Koneru and Saachi Sinai Kenkre struggled against the strong Tamil Nadu pairing of Mullai P.J. and Subiksha S, losing 15-2, 15-1. Another Goan duo,

Kanika Pai Vernekar and Ashbah Tahasildar, put up a spirited fight before suffering a narrow three game defeat to Mithra Kirubakaran and Haritha Vaithiyalingam of Tamil Nadu. After taking the second game, the Goan pair eventually lost 12-15, 15-13, 15-7. Top seeds continued to dominate the tournament with several impressive performances in the boys’ category. Andhra Pradesh’s Nikesh Durbha, the top seed, secured a convincing 15-6, 15-9 victory over Maharashtra’s Parasmay Rane.