

TEACHERS REJECT PROPOSAL TO START ACADEMIC YEAR IN APRIL

Cite summer heat, insufficient time as major hurdle; Association warns stress, fatigue will have adverse impact on students and teachers

Team Herald

PANJIM: The All Goa Secondary School Teachers' Association (AGSSTA) has strongly opposed the proposed changes to the academic calendar, which include starting the academic year in April instead of June and extending school hours to 39 hours per week. The association has warned that these changes will negatively impact students, teachers, and the overall education system in Goa.

Speaking on the issue, AGSSTA President Savio Suraj Victoria said, "Commencing the academic year in April instead of June presents numerous challenges. April is one of the hottest months in Goa, and high temperatures combined with humidity create extremely uncomfortable and unhealthy conditions for both students and teachers. Most schools lack proper cooling facilities, which increases the risk of dehydration, heat exhaustion,

KEY ISSUES RAISED BY AGSSTA

Concerns with April start:

- Opposes starting in April instead of June, citing extreme heat and lack of cooling facilities in schools
- High temperatures and humidity can cause discomfort, dehydration, and reduced focus in classrooms
- Insufficient time for teachers to complete essential post-academic year tasks, such as exam corrections and result preparation
- Disrupts Goa's traditional alignment of the academic calendar with the monsoon season, which provides a conducive learning environment

Concerns with increased school hours:

- Opposes 39-hour school week, says violates the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) guidelines of 29 hours per week
- Risk of fatigue and diminished focus among students and teachers
- Reduces time for extracurricular activities, hobbies, and family interactions, crucial for overall development

and reduced concentration in classrooms."

Victoria further explained that starting the academic year earlier would leave teachers insufficient time to complete critical post-academic year tasks. "Teachers need time to correct examination papers, including Goa Board exams for which many of them are deputed. Additionally, this change would disrupt the

finalisation of results, preparation of time-tables, annual plans, and lesson schedules for the new academic year," he said.

The AGSSTA highlighted that a sudden shift to an April start would cause unnecessary stress and confusion among students and teachers. "Both students and teachers are accustomed to the traditional June start, which aligns with Goa's climatic and

cultural conditions. Starting the academic year in June complements Goa's cooler monsoon season, providing a more conducive learning environment compared to the harsh heat of April," Victoria stated.

Addressing the proposed increase in school hours to 39 hours per week, Victoria said, "The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) prescribes a weekly

schedule of 29 hours for schools, designed to balance academics, extracurricular activities, and personal development. The proposed increase violates these guidelines."

He added that prolonged school hours would lead to fatigue and diminished focus among students, adversely affecting the quality of learning and teaching. "Increasing school hours would also limit time for co-curricular activities, hobbies, and family interactions, which are essential for the overall development of students," Victoria pointed out.

The AGSSTA has urged the Directorate of Education to reconsider the proposed changes. "We appeal to the Directorate to retain the traditional June start for the academic year and adhere to the NCF-prescribed school timings of 29 hours per week. This will ensure a balanced and sustainable approach to education," Victoria said.

shorttakes

NAVELIM RESIDENT DUPED IN WHATSAPP FRAUD CASE

MARGAO: Subhash Anvekar, a resident of Colmorod-Navelim, has lodged a formal complaint with the Margao police, alleging that an unidentified individual impersonated his friend, Sao Tomme Collaso, via WhatsApp. The impersonator deceitfully convinced Anvekar to transfer Rs 1,00,027 to various bank accounts under the pretext of an emergency. This incident constitutes cheating through the use of a communication device. The Margao police have registered an offence under Sections 318(4) and 319(2) of the BNS 2023 Act and Section 66-D of the Information Technology Act, 2000. An investigation into the matter is currently ongoing.

KARNATAKA DUO HELD FOR ILLEGALLY TRANSPORTING PIGS

PANJIM: The Valpoi Police have arrested Jeevan Shipri from Belagavi and Sagar Jadhav from Dharwad for alleged cruelty to animals. According to police, the accused were allegedly found transporting 53 pigs without any proper documents and by confining them in the carriers of the vehicles in unhygienic condition, thus subjecting them to cruelty. Two Karnataka registered vehicles used by them to transport the vehicles have been seized, police said. An FIR has been registered and the case is being investigated by ASI Laxman Parab of Valpoi Police Station.

DECOMPOSED BODY OF ELDERLY MAN DISCOVERED IN MARGAO

MARGAO: The Fatorda police have discovered the decomposed body of an 85-year-old man at a flat within the Housing Society building in Madel, Margao. Acting on a call from the Panaji Police Control Room (PCR), authorities were informed of the senior citizen who had been unresponsive for three days, with the door to his residence locked from the inside and a foul odour emanating from the flat. Upon arrival, police summoned the Fire and Emergency Services to forcibly open the door. The decomposed body of the deceased, identified as Anthony Fernandes, was found lying on the floor. A scene panchanama was conducted, and the body was sent for a post-mortem examination at the South Goa District Hospital, Margao. Due to the advanced stage of decomposition, the cause of death could not be determined immediately; however, viscera samples have been preserved for chemical analysis. Further investigations are underway.

SANGUEM RESIDENT FRAUDED BY FAKE POLICE OFFICERS

MARGAO: Shankar Gaonkar, a resident of Bhati, Sanguem, has filed a complaint with the Sanguem police, reporting that unidentified individuals, using multiple mobile number, contacted him via WhatsApp while impersonating officers from the Mumbai Crime Branch. The fraudsters verified the last four digits of his Aadhar card and deceitfully instilled fear in him by alleging his involvement in money laundering cases, threatening imprisonment. Subsequently, they dishonestly induced him to transfer Rs 90,000 to a fraudulent bank account. Meanwhile Maria Santana Dias of Benaulim has lodged a complaint with the Colva police, stating that between October 28, 2024 and November 6, 2024, an individual named Vikas Prasad impersonated a police inspector from the Delhi Crime Branch during a video call. The impersonator falsely accused her of being implicated in drug peddling, threatening her with dire consequences if she did not comply with his demands. Under this pretext, the fraudster dishonestly induced Ms Dias to transfer Rs 4,41,706 to a bank account. The Colva police have registered an offence under Sections 318(4), 319(2), and 351(2) of the BNS 2023 Act, as well as Section 66-D of the Information Technology Act, 2000 and 2008.

INTERNATIONAL PATHOLOGY CONFERENCE HELD AT MIRAMAR



PANJIM: A recent international conference on Pathology, Histopathology, and Cytopathology was held in Miramar, attracting 200 delegates from across India (representing 23 states) and overseas, including the USA, Canada, France, Australia, and New Zealand. The conference featured 23 expert talks covering various topics, such as gynaecological pathology, bone pathology, urologic pathology, head and neck pathology, salivary gland pathology, soft tissue tumours, breast pathology, thyroid pathology, slide seminars, and a slide quiz. Additionally, 90 research papers and posters were presented during the event. Dr RG Wiseman Pinto, Professor of Pathology, former Dean of Goa University, and President of the Asian Society of Cytopathology, chaired both the Scientific and Organising Committees. Renowned faculty included Dr Anais Malpica, Professor at MD Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, Texas; Dr Jerzy Klijanienko, Professor at the Curie Institute, Paris, France; Dr Rafael Jimenez, Professor at Mayo Clinic School of Medicine, Rochester, Minnesota, USA; Dr N A Jambhekar, former Professor and Head of the Pathology Department at Tata Memorial Hospital, Parel, Mumbai; and Dr RG Wiseman Pinto, alongside other distinguished national faculty members.

Poultry traders unite cross States to oppose monopolisation

Team Herald

MARGAO: In an unprecedented show of solidarity, a significant number of poultry traders from Goa, Maharashtra, and Karnataka convened in Margao on Monday evening. The meeting, organized by the All Goa Poultry Farmers and Traders Welfare Committee, sought to address growing concerns over attempts by private entities to monopolize the poultry industry and disrupt free trade. With the backing of the Goa Poultry Farmers Cooperative Society and the South Goa Poultry Products Shopkeepers & Traders Association, the gathering marked a decisive step toward safe-

guarding the interests of stakeholders and promoting poultry production in Goa.

The meeting also resolved to draft a letter to the State government, summarizing the deliberations and proposing actionable steps. A key highlight of the gathering was the emphatic assertion that there was no division between traders from Goa and their counterparts in Maharashtra and Karnataka. This statement came in response to a recent protest by Maharashtra traders, who had temporarily halted chicken supply to Goa after alleging harassment by a small section of traders within the State.

The Goa traders denounced the actions of this faction, emphasizing that it represented only a handful of individuals, while the meeting comprised a majority of the industry stakeholders. They expressed concern over practices such as imposing unnecessary controls on chicken supply and transportation, as well as demands for additional costs, which were creating a hostile environment and threatening the industry's stability.

The traders suggested that increased local chicken production and timely release of subsidies could help alleviate concerns about rising costs and stabilize prices.

AUSTERITY MEASURES



The authorities concerned have thought of a novel way of fixing things as the broken concrete slabs have been stuffed with pavers on the M G Road in Panjim

VP's directed to streamline event permission process

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Director of Panchayats has instructed all Block Development Officers (BDOs) to streamline the process of issuing permissions by village panchayats for beach weddings and other events.

In a circular, Director of Panchayats Siddhi Halarnakar stated that village panchayats should levy a uniform fee of Rs 25,000 for granting No Objection Certificates (NOCs) or permissions for events held in hotels, party areas, or lawns within their jurisdiction. "This step has been taken to streamline the process and ensure uniformity in the fees collected by village panchayats for permitting events and weddings held at resorts," the circular explained.

The Director highlighted that while the village panchayats in Goa operate under the Goa Panchayat Raj

Act, 1994, and the rules formulated under it, the Act does not explicitly address the authority of panchayats to collect fees or charges for events taking place within registered business premises such as hotels, party venues, or open lawns.

"It has been observed that applicants, including event management companies, face challenges in obtaining permissions or NOCs for events held in hotels, including beach weddings, where other connected departments or authorities are already issuing permissions for the same," Halarnakar noted.

To address this issue, the Director has instructed all BDOs to ensure that village panchayats under their jurisdiction collect a uniform, one-time fee of Rs 25,000 per event. The collected fees are to be utilised specifically for waste management activities.

Ten rescued off Goa coast during R-Day weekend

Team Herald

PANJIM: Ten persons, including three Russian nationals, were rescued from drowning off Goa's coastline by lifesavers over the busy Republic Day weekend, which usually witnesses a spurt in inbound domestic tourists.

Over the weekend, alert lifesavers also executed one triple rescue and one double rescue while managing to reunite a missing child and provide medical assistance to two persons during the same period on the state's beaches.

Two Russian women aged 33 and 34 years were rescued by lifesavers post-

ed at Baga beach. Lifesaver Nandakishor Singh rushed to their rescue when both the Russians found themselves caught in a rip current and signalled for help.

The weekend also witnessed the rescue of three men from Rajasthan aged between 21 and 24 years. The three were rescued by lifesavers Vikram Talkar and Aana Malekar with the help of a rescue board and a rescue tube after they could not extricate themselves from a rip current.

A 58-year-old Russian woman was rescued by lifesavers Divakar Desai with the help of a rescue tube. Additionally,

a 42-year-old man from Mysore and a 27-year-old from Madhya Pradesh were rescued from drowning off the same beach in two separate incidents by the lifesavers at Candolim.

Lifesaver Bhagawan Parab with a rescue board and Devu Kushnaji with a jesski rescued a 55-year-old man from Tamil Nadu after the latter got caught in a rip current at Ozran. A 33-year-old Rajasthani was rescued by lifesaver Vijay at Morjim.

A 4-year-old child from Vasco got separated from his parents at the Majorda beach and was identified and handed over to the family by lifesavers.

Activists call for Comprehensive Development Plan for Goa, cite planning crisis

Say responsible, sustainable development crucial for preserving State's unique heritage

Team Herald

MARGAO: Goa's urban planning practices have come under severe criticism from activists who are demanding an immediate implementation of a Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) to address the state's growing land use challenges.

The concerns were raised during a public talk organized by Goyche Fudle Pillge Khatir (GFPK), where certified Architect and Urban Planner Tahir Noronha highlighted the critical gaps in the current planning framework. "Goa's unique character

is being eroded by haphazard development. The absence of a comprehensive and participatory planning process threatens the very essence of our state," said GFPK President Jack Mascarenhas, calling for urgent government action. He emphasized that in the face of climate change and increasing pressure on Goa's environment, a robust and transparent planning framework is more crucial than ever.

The current system's reliance on repeatedly extended Outline Development Plans (ODPs) without proper justification or comprehensive studies has

raised serious concerns among urban planning experts and environmental activists. Noronha cited the example of Panjim, where an ODP originally meant for a 5-year period has been extended and modified for over 23 years, highlighting the systemic issues in the state's planning approach.

During the talk, Noronha expressed particular concern about the lack of detailed studies and the potential for malafide activities due to the frequent and unjustified extensions of the ODP. He stressed that Goa's distinctive urban-rural fabric demands

a holistic regional planning approach.

GFPK has outlined several comprehensive demands for immediate action. First and foremost, they are calling for an immediate halt to the practice of indefinite ODP extensions, which they argue has contributed to unplanned development patterns across the state.

Additionally, the organization is demanding that the government commission comprehensive studies to inform the development of a CDP. These studies would need to include detailed environmental impact assessments and incorporate

meaningful public consultation at every stage of the planning process.

A key aspect of GFPK's demands focuses on strengthening local governance structures. The organization emphasizes that effective land use planning necessitates strong participation from panchayats and district-level authorities, who need to be empowered with both the authority and resources to implement and enforce planning regulations effectively.

The activists have also highlighted the importance of public participation in the planning process. They

argue that local communities must have a say in development decisions that affect their neighbourhoods and livelihoods, calling for increased transparency in all planning processes.

Looking toward the future, GFPK stressed that responsible and sustainable development is crucial for preserving Goa's unique heritage. The organization has called upon not just the government but all stakeholders to prioritize a comprehensive and participatory planning approach to safeguard Goa's heritage and ensure a sustainable future for all its residents.

APPOINTMENTS

URGENTLY REQUIRED FOR A MAJOR CATERING CO. KUWAIT

SHORT LISTING IN PROGRESS

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