

TRAGEDY & TEARS AT MAHA KUMBH: 30 DIE IN STAMPEDE

Govt stifles details of tragedy for hours as the grief-stricken search for answers in the melee; much-touted AI-driven surveillance fails litmus test



Rescue operation underway at the Mahakumbh Mela, in Prayagraj, Wednesday; (right) a family member of injured devotees prays for relief after the tragedy unfolded



AGENCIES, MAHAKUMBH NAGAR: At least 30 people were killed and 60 injured in a pre-dawn stampede at the Sangam area of the Maha Kumbh early Wednesday as millions of pilgrims jostled for space to take a holy dip on the occasion of one of the most auspicious days of Mauni Amavasya.

For several hours there was little clarity on how the tragedy unfolded between 1-2 am, and even on the number of casualties, before Maha Kumbh DIG Vaibhav Krishna gave the details of the casualties at a press con-

“Now that the truth of the claims of making world class arrangements has come out in front of everyone, those who were claiming and spreading false propaganda about it should resign from their posts taking moral responsibility for the people killed in this accident”

— Akhilesh Yadav, Samajwadi Party president

“It is important to get to the bottom of the whole episode on how such a tragedy occurred”

— Yogi Adityanath, UP CM

“I express my deepest condolences to the bereaved families and hope for the speedy recovery of the injured... Mismanagement and the administration's special focus on VIP movement instead of common devotees are responsible for this tragic incident... VIP culture should be curbed and the government should make better arrangements to meet the needs of common devotees”

— Rahul Gandhi, Congress leader

ference here in the evening. “The incident took place due to the pressure of the crowd. The crowd broke barricades and jumped to the other side, crushing those waiting there. Over 90 injured were rushed to

the hospital, of whom 30 died,” he said. The officer said 25 of the deceased have been identified. Four of them are from Karnataka and one each from Assam and Gujarat. Among those injured, 36

are undergoing treatment at the hospital and the rest have been sent with their families.

The tragedy also means that the government's much-touted security ban-dobast, which includes

AI-driven surveillance meant to give advance warnings on overcrowding, fell woefully short when it came to actual on-ground handling of the millions of devotees.

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Political firestorm over South Goa SP's transfer

Team Herald

PANJIM: Activists and Opposition politicians have slammed the unceremonious transfer of senior IPS officer Sunita Sawant from her post as South Goa SP even as theories abound as to what could have led to the axe falling on her.

In fact, Sawant had received the Special Recognition Award on Republic Day for her planning skills and for ensuring the peaceful conduct of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in Goa. Two days later, on the night of January 28, when she was removed from her post, via wireless message issued by Goa Police top brass, the decision was met with mixed reactions of anger, confusion and speculation.

The wireless message, sent from the police control room in the wee hours of Tuesday, asked her to vacate the office and report to the police headquarters, Panjim, immediately - going against court guidelines that recommend a minimum three-year posting for SPs.

A few hours before her transfer was effected, SP Sawant had issued a private message to all police stations in her jurisdiction, directing inspectors to gather information on the movements of senior functionaries of the Bajrang Dal.

“There were rumblings about activities planned by the Bajrang Dal in Goa. The SP wanted to clamp down

“Police department and home department are now saying that if you require protection do not come to us. Do not even go to police station. You visit the Bajrang Dal office. This is the message being conveyed by this transfer. Everyone knows that Bajrang Dal activists take law in their hand and provide protection”

— Prabhakar Timble, former State Election Commissioner and political analyst

“There were rumblings about activities planned by the Bajrang Dal in Goa. The SP wanted to clamp down on any potential communal unrest before it occurred; so she had sent a private message asking for intel. It seems that this message, meant only for the PIs under her command, got leaked and led to her transfer”

— Police officer on condition of anonymity



ed on meeting all South Goa police station in-charges at the Margao headquarters at least once a week. She is also known to be tough on cops who deviate from protocol, or act on orders from their political bosses.

Just last weekend, Sawant had come down heavily on cops from the Sanguem police station, who allegedly went to the house of an accused person at 1 am and harassed his wife. The case against the Sanguem man, a YouTuber was a bailable offence, and there was no reason for the police to search the accused person's house until 3 am and behave rudely with his family members, said the source.

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Was SP Sawant betrayed by her own colleagues?

The officer is known to be a strict boss and insist-

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OPENING TOMORROW
Don't fly DUBAI visit & Shop of
FIRST TIME BIGGEST EVER
EXHIBITION IN GOA
SHOPPING UTSAV
SGPDA GROUND MARGAO
31st Jan To 09th Feb
TIME: 10.30 am To 9.00 pm

Site of fatal brawl, Arambol shack to be pulled down

Shack licence owner slapped with Rs 25 lakh fine; minister admits difficulty in monitoring shacks

Team Herald

PANJIM: Days after a brawl at his shack led to the death of a local villager in Arambol, the Department of Tourism has cancelled the shack license issued to Manuel Espritosanto Fernandes and imposed a hefty penalty of Rs 25 lakh. Fernandes is accused of subletting his shack at Arambol beach to a third party, whose workers were involved in an assault that led to the death of Amar Bandekar, the villager.

The Tourism Department has ordered Fernandes to demolish the shack within seven days, warning that failure to comply will result in the demolition being carried out at his own expense, with costs recovered as arrears of land revenue. Additionally, Fernandes has been permanently black-

Tourism Department has ordered Fernandes to demolish the shack within seven days, warning that failure to comply will result in the demolition being carried out at his own expense, with costs recovered as arrears of land revenue. Fernandes has been permanently blacklisted and barred from participating in future shack allotments under the Tourism Shack Policy

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The department's action follows a report submitted by the Mandrem Police Inspector on January 27, 2025, which confirmed that Fernandes had violat-

ed Clause 20 of the Tourism Shack Policy by subletting the shack. As part of the penalty, the security deposit paid by Fernandes has been forfeited to the government treasury.

On Wednesday, Pernem SDPO Ashish Shirodkar along with Mandrem PI Sheriff Jacques held a meeting with shack owners from Arambol, Mandrem, Morjim and Keri areas and sternly warned them not to take law in their hand. The shack owners were also instructed to shut their shacks by 11 pm.

This is not the first case of subletting. In September 2023, the Department of Tourism imposed Rs 10 lakh as fine on Raymond Zeno Fernandes from Calangute for subletting his shack. His security deposit was also forfeited.

Tourism Minister Rohan Khantule expressed

AIMING FOR THE SKY



ISRO's GSLV carrying navigation satellite NVS-02 lifts off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh

Marriage of two Hindus can't be dissolved within a year: Allahabad HC

PTI, PRAYAGRAJ (UP): The Allahabad High Court has observed that marriage between two Hindus is sacrosanct and it cannot be dissolved within one year of marriage unless there is exceptional hardship or depravity as provided under the Hindu Marriage Act.

The order was passed by a two-judge bench of Justices Ashwani Kumar Mishra and Donadi Ramesh. The couple - Nishant Bharadwaj and Rishika Gautam - had filed for mutual dissolution of marriage under Section 13-B of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. However, it was rejected by the Family Court in Saharanpur on the ground that the minimum period for moving the application as provided under Section 14 of the Act had not elapsed.

In its January 15 judgment, the division bench dismissed the first appeal filed by Bharadwaj challenging the Family Court order, leaving it open for the two parties to move a fresh application after the expiry of one year. It was observed that except for mutual incompatibility, no exceptional circumstance was shown to exist to allow the parties to file for divorce within one year of marriage.

MAX. TEMP 33.8 °C
MIN. TEMP 20.5 °C

idharudhar



WhatsApp is out. What about Facebook or Instagram?

Panjim's meat vendors fought hard, and now they can smile again

Meat traders hail SC directive to CCP giving them space for stalls in market

Team Herald

PANJIM: It's a battle for livelihood that was fought right up to the Supreme Court, and now that they have finally got a favourable ruling, the meat vendors of Panjim are cautiously optimistic about their future.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday had directed the Corporation of the City of Panjim (CCP) to allocate fixed spots to the meat vendors in a temporary shed being constructed for the rehabilitation of fish vendors at the old fish



market complex. All Goa Beef Vendors Association president, Mannasab Bepari, hailed the verdict, stating, "We are satisfied with the Supreme Court order. The judge heard our grievances and acknowledged that

we need to be rehabilitated. Our lawyers, former Additional Solicitor General Atmaram Nadkarni and Advocate Rohit Bras De Sa, also presented our case and convinced the court of the need for our rehabilitation. We are now

awaiting the next steps."

One of the petitioners, Mushtak Hussain Khatib, expressed relief, saying, "We are extremely happy that we have received justice. We were the rightful occupants of the fish market building until it was demolished. In October 2024, the High Court had instructed CCP to frame a scheme for the meat vendors within six months, but the Corporation challenged the order in Supreme Court. Our livelihoods were impacted over the last six months as we were unable to conduct

our business."

CCP Market Committee Chairman and Councillor Bento Lorena confirmed that the Corporation would comply with the court's ruling. "We will follow the Supreme Court's instructions and provide six spots to the meat vendors in the fish market. Additionally, we will make provisions for them to store refrigerators. Vendors will be required to pay sopo (tax) to the CCP, and they will be allowed to occupy these spots until the new building is completed," Lorena said.

HOW THE LIVELIHOOD BATTLE WAS WON

January 3, 2024: CCP issued notices to eight vendors to vacate the old fish market building, citing its dilapidated condition

January 5: Vendors say they're ready to vacate, but only if they are given alternative space within the municipal market area

August 21: CCP seals all shops along with all movable/perishable items

August 23: Vendors approach High Court, which asks CCP to submit plans to rehabilitate meat vendors

Sept 3: High Court asked the CCP to provide alternate premises to meat vendors

Oct 18: High Court directed the CCP to frame a scheme for the meat and chicken vendors within next six months till the new building is constructed

Dec 12: CCP files special leave petition in the Supreme Court seeking to quash and set aside the High Court order

Jan 28, 2025: Supreme Court orders CCP to provide fixed spots to six meat vendors