

## Ghaziabad: Truck carrying over 60 LPG cylinders explodes, 4 shops charred, no injuries

**PTI, GHAZIABAD:** More than 60 cooking gas cylinders loaded in a truck en route to Ghaziabad blew up in an explosion early Saturday, the fire department said.

The explosion was caused by a fire around 4 am, likely due to fric-

tion in the cylinders, officials said. At least four furniture shops in the vicinity turned into ashes and some vehicles parked nearby also got burned, they said.

Chief Fire Officer Rahul Pal told PTI that it took more than eight

fire tenders around 90 minutes to douse the flames. No casualties were reported.

The sound of the explosion and the consequent mayhem sent people nearby scampering to safety, with many vacating their

houses.

According to officials, when the driver noticed the fire, he parked the truck near a petrol pump. Soon after, the blasts happened, and the staff deserted the pump, which was also later shut.

Eyewitnesses said a few cylinders fell into the petrol pump premises but did not explode. Dinesh Kasana, an office bearer of the district unit of the BJP, claimed that around 100 cylinders exploded.

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### BUDGET'S TAX RELIEF BALM FOR BRISTLING MIDDLE CLASS

While maintaining the thrust on infrastructure development, it also continued to provide increasing support to the MSME and the agricultural sector.

Also announced were duty cuts on intermediaries and certain life saving drugs.

To balance the revenue lost, she budgeted a modest increase in capital spending at Rs 11.21 lakh crore in the next financial year compared to a lowered Rs 10.18 lakh crore in current fiscal. Besides, an increase in dividend expected from the Reserve Bank and other government-owned financial institutions will also help to contain the losses.

The budget comes against the backdrop of the Indian economy growing at its weakest pace since pandemic and rising geopolitical risks particularly with the new US President Donald Trump threatening to impose widespread tariffs including on India.

The 6.4% GDP growth estimated for the current fiscal and 6.3 to 6.8% in the next are well below the 8% growth needed to meet the ambitious goal of making India a developed nation by 2047.

"Our endeavour will be to keep the fiscal deficit each year such that the central government debt remains on a declining path as a percentage of the GDP," she said, projecting debt at 50% of GDP by March 2031.

Other measures include a national mission to push high-yielding crops with a special focus on pulses and cotton production, hike in the limit of subsidised credit to farmers to Rs 5 lakh from Rs 3 lakh, missions to push manufacturing and exports, a new policy for labour intensive sectors like leather and footwear and a scheme to make India a global hub for toy manufacturing.

The finance minister also announced a social security cover for nearly 1 crore gig workers and aRs 10,000 crore fund of funds for start-ups.

Another major announcement was setting a target of at least 100 gigawatt of electricity from nuclear energy by 2047 and amendment to nuclear liability regulations to allow private sector investment.

She proposed a hike in the threshold of tax collected at source on remittances under the RBI's Liberalised Remittance Scheme from Rs 7 lakh to Rs 10 lakh, benefiting the travel and foreign exchange sectors. Students and individuals seeking medical treatment will also benefit from this.

Rationalising TDS provisions, the finance minister increased the thresholds for non deduction across various TDS provisions broadly ranging from Rs 5,000 to Rs 50,000. The threshold for TDS on rent has been increased from Rs 2.40 lakh to Rs 6 lakh.

That apart, omissions of higher TDS/TCS rates are now applicable for non-filers.

### VELSAO LOCALS PROTEST 'BARRICADING' OF CROSS AT SANCOALE

"Private landowners, senior citizens, and devotees are suffering due to this move," added D'Souza.

He also pointed out that the Form I and XIV land records indicate the land belongs to the public of Sancoale, installing the barricades illegally.

A youth, Aliston Pinto highlighted the long-standing environmental and infrastructural issues faced by locals due to industrial expansion in the area.

"The government had given land to Zuari Agro Chemicals for industrial purposes and employment, but we have only suffered—air and water pollution, ruined farmlands, and skin diseases among farmers. Now, instead of addressing our grievances, the land is being sold to private builders for mega residential projects," Pinto said.

The protestors warned that a large-scale residential project with hundreds of flats and villas would further burden the region's water and electricity supply, impacting the locals.

"We are already struggling with water and power shortages. This influx of outsiders will consume our limited resources and destroy the village's social fabric. The sewage and garbage from these mega projects will pollute our farms and the Bellem area," said Pinto.

He also revealed that the site holds historical and religious importance, as it is connected to Our Lady of Rem-

edies chapel (Three Kings chapel) and features footsteps believed to belong to Our Lady of Remedies.

"This Holy Cross is a place of worship for generations. The builder initially assured access but has now blocked entry and stationed guards. Even private landowners have been landlocked by these barricades," he added.

A resident Devidas Satarkar urged the Sancoale Panchayat to intervene and reject the builder's project proposal until the local issues are resolved.

"How can industrial land be converted into a residential zone without considering the impact on locals? The authorities must wake up and act before it's too late," he said.

### VEDANTA TAKES A STEP BACK IN FACE-OFF WITH BICHOLIM TRUCKERS

In a statement, the Vedanta Sesa Goa stated that all issues have been amicably resolved in a consultative manner. "Vedanta Sesa Goa prioritises the interests of the local community and in order to compensate for the restriction in number of trips for transportation of ore, it is being initiated on a trial basis to facilitate the TOA (Truck Owners' Association) to transport overburden," it said, welcoming the resumption of ore transportation.

Meanwhile, a miscellaneous civil application filed by the Vedanta Limited seeking permission to transport ore from Matwada-Pilgao Junction to Sarmanas Jetty will come up for hearing before the High Court of Bombay at Goa on Tuesday, February 4.

The villagers of Pilgao have objected to ore transportation from Matwada junction claiming that it is their private tenanted property and they have blocked the portion of the road. The villagers have alleged that the government without considering it granted permission to the mining company.

According to the villagers, they had also filed a petition before the District Court, Panjim praying to revoke the permission granted to the company and it is pending.

After the villagers objected to the ore transportation through Matwada junction, the government gave transit permission to the company to use the main road.

### GOA CONGRESS: PUPPET ON A BJP STRING?

Elvis Gomes, a former bureaucrat and Congress leader, also voiced concerns about the party's performance as an opposition. "The Congress party has not shown its role as an effective opposition. I agree with the general perception that the party is failing in this regard," Gomes admitted. "There's no mechanism to assess what the party does as an opposition. A party should be a collective effort, not reliant on just one or two individuals. Congress needs to introspect. Its failure to meet the people's expectations is why questions are being raised in the press. We also need to sever the ties some former Congress leaders have with the BJP, as this has led to defections."

Congress leader Everson Vales from Nuvem, however, offered a more optimistic view. "The Congress party is preparing for upcoming elections across all constituencies, and we will raise the tempo at the right time," Vales said confidently. "Political pundits had written off Congress before the recent Lok Sabha elections, but we proved them wrong. The party knows how to strike at the right moment, and we are preparing for that."

Yogesh Nagvenkar, a Congress member from Fatorda, acknowledged the difficulties but also emphasized the importance of grassroots support. "Although the number of leaders has dwindled after many joined the ruling party, those of us still in Congress are doing our job," he said. "The people of Goa still have high hopes for Congress, and we haven't met those expectations. This is why questions about the party's role are being raised. We need a new leadership strategy at the municipal and panchayat levels to win back the hearts of the people. Congress must tighten its shoes and rally the masses with a fresh and powerful voice."

### AS BHUTANI MOVES IN, VILLAGERS PREPARE PROTEST PITCH AGAIN

A large section of residents of Cortalim constituency have expressed frustration with the stance of Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who they feel has not taken sufficient action. The protests gained further momentum after allegations surfaced that Parmesh Construction Ltd, the company spearheading the project, had begun unauthorized construction, including bore well work, without securing the necessary permits.

Local resident Ralph D'Souza, who lives near the proposed project site in Savorfond, raised concerns after hearing machinery in operation for several days. "For the past three days, I've heard the sound of a machine digging a bore well. The noise was intermittent but lasted for hours. We fear they've started the work secretly," he said.

Bhutani Infra had previously promised that no construction would begin until the matter was resolved by the Goa Bench of the Bombay High Court. However, the arrival of construction equipment, workers, and security personnel—allegedly with the help of local police—has heightened suspicions among villagers that the project is moving forward despite legal uncertainties.

"They are operating with a live construction licence but haven't secured the necessary permissions from relevant authorities," said Socorin Joseph, a long-time protester. "Since our Sarpanch, MLA, and Chief Minister have chosen to remain silent, we have no choice but to stay vigilant. We'll continue the fight, no matter what."

Peter D'Souza, a petitioner challenging the project in court, explained that during the last hearing, he was instructed to file an affidavit outlining the failure of local authorities, including the Panchayat and the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Department, to respond to the concerns raised by residents. "The court has instructed the authorities to explain why they have not replied after four months," D'Souza said. "I will submit my affidavit at the next hearing on Monday, February 3, 2025, and we expect the court to take appropriate action after that."

Residents, including Shamal Naik, have expressed frustration with the local leadership. "When we heard that equipment had been brought in, my wife and I went to the panchayat office to inform the Sarpanch and the secretary, but as usual, they did not react," said Naik.

The controversy is further fuelled by the fact that Bhutani Infra has yet to secure essential environmental clearances, including approval from the Ministry of Environment, the Electricity Department, and even a Sanad, a critical document for land transactions. Despite claims of

support from Sarpanch Derrick Valles, many locals feel he is not acting in their best interest. "The Sarpanch says he is with the people, but his actions suggest otherwise," said Remedios, a resident.

Attempts to reach Sancoale Sarpanch Derrick Valles for comment were unsuccessful, as he did not respond to phone calls.

The protests have seen an outpouring of support from women in the community, who are becoming increasingly vocal in their opposition to the project. "Just because the elected officials bend to money doesn't mean we will allow our voices to be silenced," said Ismen Dias, one of the protest leaders. "The future of our children is our priority, and we won't back down."

**Just because the elected officials bend to money doesn't mean we will allow our voices to be silenced. The future of our children is our priority, and we won't back down**

— Ismen Dias, villager

### 8 NAXALITES KILLED IN CHHATTISGARH ENCOUNTER

Personnel of the District Reserve Guard and Special Task Force of the State police along with the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and its elite unit CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action) were involved in the operation, the official said.

The operation was launched on Friday after receiving information about the presence of cadres of the 'West Bastar division' of the Maoists in the area, he said.

### SETBACK FOR AAP IN DELHI, 8 OUTGOING MLAS JOIN BJP

The MLAs who joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are Vandana Gaur (Palam), Rohit Mehraulia (Trilokpur), Girish Soni (Madipur), Madan Lal (Kasturba Nagar), Rajesh Rishi (Uttam Nagar), B S Joon (Bijwasan), Naresh Yadav (Mehrauli) and Pawan Sharma (Adarsh Nagar).

After resigning from the AAP, they said they had also sent their resignation letters to the Assembly speaker, relinquishing their membership of the House.

Former AAP MLA Vijender Garg and several other leaders of the Kejriwal-led party too joined the saffron outfit in the presence of Baijayant Panda, its national vice-president and the in-charge of the Delhi BJP, and state president Virendra Sachdeva.

Welcoming the MLAs and leaders to the BJP, Panda said it is a "historic" day as they have gotten rid of "AAP-da" (disaster) and hoped that after the February 5 polls, Delhi too will be freed from it.

The 70-member Delhi Assembly is scheduled to go to polls on February 5, with the results set to be declared on February 8.

### MONTH'S MIND

In Loving Memory of  
**LIBANIA SEVERINA FERNANDES**  
(PERNEM)  
There will be an Eucharistic Celebration for the soul of our beloved Libania on Monday, 3rd February, 2025 (tomorrow) at 8:15 a.m. at St. Joseph Church, Pernem, followed by prayers at the grave, offered by her sorrowful family.  
Relatives & friends kindly accept this as the only intimation.

**FIRST DEATH ANNIVERSARY**  
"In God's Arms you will rest forever  
In Our Hearts you will stay forever".  
In Everloving Memory of  
**FRANCISCO RODRIGUES**  
(PAKLUSH)  
(Bernard Carneiro- Vaddy Merces)  
There will be an Eucharistic Celebration for the soul of our beloved Francisco on Monday, 03rd February 2025 at 7:00 am at Our Lady of Merces Church, Merces followed by prayers and blessing at the grave, offered by his loving Wife: Flavia (Paklu), Daughters/ Son-in-law: Palmira / Terence and Sania and family.  
Relatives, Neighbours & Friends kindly accept this as the only intimation.  
Aquila Advt. 9421371771 / 9421517777

### MONTH'S MIND

In loving memory of  
**PAULINA RODRIGUES**  
(CORTE-REAL, ST. CRUZ)  
There will be a Eucharistic Celebration for the soul of Mrs. Paulina Rodrigues on Monday, 3rd February, 2025 at 7.15 am at Holy Cross Church, St. Cruz, followed by prayers at St. Cruz Cemetery. Offered by her sorrowful family.  
Relatives and friends kindly accept this as the only intimation.

**MONTHS MIND**  
IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
**JOSE LOURENCO REBELO**  
(Retired A.S.I) GOA POLICE  
CARITAS COLONY - CHINCHINIM  
There will be an Eucharistic Celebration for the soul of our beloved Daddy on 3/02 /2025 at 8.00 a.m. at Our Lady of Hope Church, Chinchinim followed by prayers & blessing at the grave.  
Offered by his sorrowful wife: Floriana Rebelo  
Children: Micky, Adv Misha/Stanley, Melisha/ Glen & Grandchildren.  
Relatives & friends kindly accept this as the only intimation.  
Costy's Ads, Chinchinim, Navelim 9850473904

**MONTH'S MIND**  
In loving memory of  
**IVO AGNELO FRANCISCO SANTIMANO FERNANDES**  
(Loutolim)  
There will be an Eucharistic Celebration for the soul of IVO at 7:30 a.m. on Monday, 3rd February 2025 at Saviour of the World Church, Loutolim, followed by prayers and blessing at the grave. Offered by his sorrowful family.  
Relatives and friends please accept this as the only intimation.  
Confident Advtg. & Funeral Services, Margao 9823022194

**THIRD DEATH ANNIVERSARY**  
In Loving Memory Of  
**OLLIE ALMEIDA**  
(Murida, Cuncolim)  
There will be an Eucharistic Celebration for the soul of our beloved mother on Monday, 3rd February, 2025, at 7.00 a.m. at Infant Jesus Chapel, Murida, Cuncolim, offered by her children: Ayona / Robert D'Silva, Athlone / Tanya Almeida, Ajoy / Sienna Almeida, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.  
Relatives, neighbours and friends kindly accept this as our only intimation.  
Confident Advtg. & Funeral Service, Margao 9823022194

**THIRD DEATH ANNIVERSARY**  
In Ever Loving Memory of  
**Mr. Joaquim Nicolao Pereira**  
( Ex Mombasa & Ex MDLB )  
There will be a Eucharistic Celebration for the soul of our beloved Dad, late Mr. Joaquim on 03.02.2025 at 8 am at Our Lady of Lourdes Church Utorda, followed by prayers and blessings of the grave offered by his sorrowful children.  
RELATIVES, NEIGHBOURS AND FRIENDS KINDLY ACCEPT THIS AS THE ONLY INTIMATION.

**THIRD DEATH ANNIVERSARY**  
In Cherished Memory of  
**DENZIL THOMAS RODRIGUES**  
Born : 28/06/1984 Died : 03/02/2022  
**GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN ALWAYS IN OUR THOUGHTS FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS**  
Fondly remembered by his sorrowful parents Anthony and Bridget Rodrigues and family.  
There will be an Eucharistic celebration for the soul of our beloved Denzil on Monday 3rd February 2025 at 07:00 am at St Anne's Church Parra followed by prayers at the grave.  
Relatives, Neighbours and friends kindly accept this as the only intimation.

**CONDOLENCE**  
We deeply mourn the sad demise of our beloved friend  
**Kennedy Fernandes**  
-- Calvaddo - Varca --  
May almighty God grant him eternal rest  
May his soul rest in peace  
You will be missed forever  
Deepest sympathies by:  
**DARRYL MARTINS and Family**  
Confident Advtg. & Funeral Services, Margao 9823022194

**A TEARFUL FAREWELL**  
to our dear friend  
**KENNEDY FERNANDES**  
-- CALVADDO - VARCA --  
The beautiful moments you shared with us will never be forgotten.  
You will always be in our hearts.  
Rest in peace dear Kennedy....  
One day we all shall meet again.  
Fondly remembered by:  
**UNITED FRIENDS OF CALVADDO**  
Ramiro Sales, Gabby Antao, Ashley Rodrigues, Navil Fernandes, Darryl Martins  
Confident Advtg. & Funeral Service, Margao 9823022194

**RETURNED TO THE LORD**  
"If we live, we live for the LORD and if we die, we die for the LORD. Therefore, whether we live or die, we belong to God".....Romans 14:8  
**KENNEDY FERNANDES**  
-Varca -  
Born: 12-12-1985 — Died: 01-02-2025  
Beloved Son of Mariano Minguet Fernandes / Clara Niquela Noronha, Brother/Brother-in-law of Melanie / Tome and Lafisha.  
Funeral cortege will leave his residence (Today) 2nd February 2025 at 4:00 pm to Our Lady of Gloria Church, Varca for Eucharistic celebration followed by burial.  
Relatives, neighbours & friends kindly accept this as the only intimation.  
diva 9763824344

**RETURNED TO THE LORD**  
**CUSTODIO TOME DIAS**  
CANSALIM  
Son of late Batista Dias/late Rosa Fernandes, Husband of Marcelina Fernandes, Father of Chayanne & Myra Dias, Brother/brother-in-law of Sebastiao/Effie Dias, Antonio/Sidhu Dias, Regina/Francisco Fernandes, Uncle of Sameera/Derick, Jeslon/Franzy, Sydon,Delosha & Shaylon.  
Funeral cortege will leave his residence at Buttem - Cansaulim at 3:15 pm on 2nd February 2025, followed by Eucharistic celebration and burial at St. Thomas Church, Cansaulim at 3:30 pm  
Relatives, neighbours & friends kindly accept this as the only intimation.  
Rebello Publicity & Funeral Services Margao 9822383992