

## Oppn spits fire in Lok Sabha, seeks answers on Kumbh stampede

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** Opposition MPs in the Lok Sabha on Monday voiced strong concerns over the Kumbh Mela stampede, accusing the government of negligence and insensitivity and calling for accountability.

Speaking during the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address, DMK MP Kanimozhi expressed her condolences and criticised the government for its failure to ensure the safety of pilgrims.

"I would like to express my grief and empathy to the people who lost their lives in the Kumbh Mela stampede. These people trusted the Union and state governments, hoping they would be protected, but unfortunately, no one protected them," she said.

The Lok Sabha on Monday witnessed prolonged noisy protests by opposition parties, demanding a discussion on the stampede in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj and a list of the deceased.

She alleged that the government's approach to governance has led to societal divisions.

"When religion and politics merge, it is the innocent who suffer. We don't even know the exact number of people who died in the stampede," she remarked.

Highlighting broader

### KHARGE PAYS TRIBUTE TO 'THOUSANDS' DEAD AT KUMBH STAMPEDE

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday paid tributes to 'thousands' who died in the January 29 Maha Kumbh stampede, triggering an uproar from the treasury benches even as Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar asked him to retract the statement.

Kharge, the Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha, was quick to add that "this is my estimate (and) if this is not right you (the government) should tell what is the truth." He said he was ready to be corrected.

"I did not say 'thousands' to blame anyone. But how many people died, give that information at least. I will apologise if I am wrong. They should give figures how many died, how many are missing," he said.

There was a stampede during the Amrit Snan on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya on January 29. According to the figures provided by the Uttar Pradesh government, 30 people were killed and 60 others were injured.

However, while participating in a debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address in Rajya Sabha, Kharge used the phrase "the thousands who died in Kumbh" to pay tributes to the deceased.

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concerns about representation, Kanimozhi pointed out, "Just look around -- there is a decreasing number of Muslim members in Parliament and fewer bureaucrats from the SC, ST, OBC, and minority communities".

Meanwhile, the President's Address glorified 'civilisational nationalism', a phrase increasingly used

to promote a monolithic culture, she said.

She also slammed the government's policies towards minorities, citing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's autonomy, and "increasing" attacks on civil society.

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### SACRED DIP



'Sadhus' take a holy dip at the Sangam on the occasion of Basant Panchami during the ongoing Kumbh Mela, in Prayagraj, on Monday

### National Games: Goa's Akanksha wins gold in squash



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**PANJIM:** Goa secured its second gold medal in the 38th National Games being held in Dehradun, Uttarakhand after squash player Akanksha Salunkhe beat Maharashtra's Anjali Shenwal 11-6, 11-5, 11-2 in straight sets.

With this win she confirmed her top ranking in the tournament. Pintoo Rai the team coach said she maintained a high standard of play through the tournament and her game in the finals was at that level.

Attempts to contact Akanksha proved futile because she had already left for Mumbai.

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## Tollywood producer K P Choudhary dies by suicide in Goa

Team Herald

**PANJIM:** Noted Telugu film producer K P Choudhary was found dead in a rented house in Oxel, Siolim, North Goa, on Monday morning. Police confirmed that the 44-year-old producer, known for co-producing Rajinikanth's Telugu film Kabali, died by suicide.

Superintendent of Police (North) Akshat Kaushal stated that Anjuna police station's Siolim outpost received information about the incident and an investigation is underway.

"A police team rushed to the spot and noticed that Choudhary had killed himself by hanging from a ceiling fan in his bedroom, using a bed sheet," police said. His body has been sent to Goa Medical College and Hospital in Bambolim for post-mortem, while his family has been informed to collect the remains.

Reports suggest that Choudhary had been struggling with severe financial



**A police source stated that 44-year-old producer, K P Choudhary had been battling depression for the past eight days. It is alleged that he was constantly harassed by the Telangana Police for money and information**

losses and pressure from lenders. A source close to him, speaking to O Herald, described him as a very down-to-earth person. "His friends abandoned him once he faced financial distress. He was struggling even to pay rent," the source revealed. Before his

death, he expressed gratitude towards some Goan friends who supported him during difficult times.

A police source stated that Choudhary had been battling depression for the past eight days. It is alleged that he was constantly harassed by the Telangana Police for money and information.

After setbacks in the film industry, he allegedly became involved in drug distribution and was arrested by the Cyberabad Special Operations Team in 2023 for supplying narcotics to clients in Tollywood, Kollywood and in business circles. He also operated OHM pub in Goa, where he was accused of providing drugs to celebrities.

A suicide note recovered from the scene stated that he took the step of his own volition. The note also stated that his body should be handed over to his aged mother in Tamil Nadu.

Police are continuing their probe into the circumstances surrounding his death.

### Land grab mastermind Siddiqui slapped with 2 chargesheets



Team Herald

**PANJIM:** The Special Investigation Team (SIT) Land & Grabbing has filed two charge sheets against the land grabbing mastermind Suleman Khan alias Siddiqui in two offences registered in Mapusa and Valpoi respectively.

The two charge sheets - one containing 852 pages and other 656 - were filed on January 30 before the JMFC, Mapusa and JMFC, Valpoi in two cases of land grabbing registered against the proclaimed offender.

Fearing arrest, Siddiqui, who had over 15 serious cases booked against him, had been changing his looks and was on the run for the last five years. He was arrested in 2024, but had escaped from the Crime Branch's custody after which he was rearrested.

In the first offence registered at the Mapusa Police Station on September 19, 2020, based on the complaint from Arjun S Shetye from the Office of the Civil Registrar cum Sub Registrar of Bardez, Mapusa, where he accused unknown persons of land grabbing by preparing forged documents by impersonating the lawful owners of a land in Mapusa and using the counterfeit rubber stamp of the Civil Registrar cum Sub Registrar of Bardez.

Shetye stated that the accused person fraudulently produced the forged documents as genuine before the authorities and succeeded in transferring the ownership rights thereby cheating and depriving the owners of land/property from enjoying their legal rights.

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## Trump pauses tariffs on Mexico

**AP, WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump held off Monday on his tariff threats against Mexico for one month of further negotiations after Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum agreed to send 10,000 members of her country's national guard to the border to address drug trafficking.

Trump's tariffs against Canada and China were still slated to go into effect Tuesday, but uncertainty remained about the du-



rability of any deals and whether the tariffs were a harbinger of a broader trade war, as Trump has promised more import taxes to come.

The US and Mexican leaders announced the pause after what Trump described on social media as a "very friendly conversation," and he said he looked forward to the upcoming talks.

Trump said the talks would be headed by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Secretary of Treasury Scott Bessent and Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick and high-level representatives of Mexico.

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### RED-LETTER DAY: FEBRUARY 4

On this day in 1987, Konkani was declared the Official Language of Goa. But 38 years on, many dreams are unfulfilled:

- Only 32 of 194 Goa govt dept websites are in Konkani

- No dedicated auditoriums for tiatr, claim thespians

- Only 2 percent of the minority Roman-script users are in government jobs because they are unable to take exams in Devanagari, says President of the 'Global Romi Lipi Abhiyan'

So how will we fight to keep Konkani alive? An O Herald special coverage

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

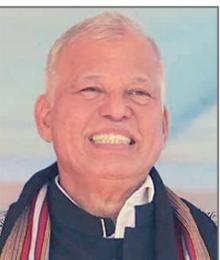
## Konknni: Kaal, aiz, faleam anik sodankaal

On February 4, 1987, the Official Language Bill that gave Konkani Official Language status was passed. But, the battle for Konkani and Statehood of Goa could not have succeeded without the support of the people who came out in large numbers

LUIZINHO FALEIRO

**PANJIM:** The battle for Konkani and Statehood has been the most passionate of movements Goa has ever seen or that Goans will ever witness. While the Opinion Poll of 1967 may have settled the question of merger of Goa with Maharashtra, it neither protected Konkani nor granted Statehood to Goa.

It was a status quo and it was over 25 years after Liberation that we were able to obtain Official Language recognition for Konkani and Statehood for Goa. Neither would have been achievable had it not been for the people who, unlike at other times, came together, stood resolutely and did not waver in their determination to make Konkani the Official Language of Goa.



"(On February 4, 1987) I walk out in protest because this is blackmail of the people who wanted to merge Goa with Maharashtra and this government has succumbed to the blackmail (When amendment to provide the use of Marathi for all or any official purposes was admitted). Today is a black day for the people of this territory and the people will not tolerate this. They have murdered Konkani and I walk out in protest

- Luizinho Faleiro, Former Chief Minister of Goa

It turned into a veritable battle waged by the people of a pacific land, a land that has since time immemorial been known for its unique history, geography, culture and, most important of all, peace.

In early January 1987, the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi sent an emissary to Goa with directions to his party to pass the Official Language Bill. On January 11, 1987, Congress

party observers came to Goa and met with the party MLAs. The Konknni Porjecho Avaz and Goa Congress also met the Congress party observers for detailed discussions.

But the struggle was far from over as the MGP was not ready to accept sole Official Language status to Konkani. On January 31, 1987, the demand for Marathi was reiterated. On February 2, 1987, the Chief Minister

gave notice to the Speaker Dayanand Narvekar requesting to schedule the Official Language Bill that had been introduced in the previous session for discussion in the forthcoming session. At 3.30 pm on February 4, 1987, at the end of Question Hour, the Speaker Dayanand Narvekar adjourned the House.

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## Official Language Act: A betrayal of Goa's Minority Community

The Act defined Konkani as 'Konkani in Devanagari script' and granted Marathi near-equal status. The exclusion of Konkani in Roman script will go down as the greatest betrayal of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

TOMAZINHO CARDOZO

**PANJIM:** It is a fact that we need an official language for our State, as it helps citizens improve their quality of life in all aspects. But has Goa's Official Language helped improve the living conditions of Goan citizens? No! The Goa Official Language Act (OLA) has done — and continues to do — great injustice to the minority community of Goa.

Consider the language scenario in Goa in 1987 when the OLA was passed. Goans were divided over both the issue of language and the script. Soon after Liberation, a conflict arose between two languages — Marathi and Konkani. Over 95% of Goa's population spoke Konkani at the time, but not all considered it their mother tongue. As a result, the majority of Hindus in Goa wanted Marathi to be the official language, while practically the entire Christian community, along



"Another conspiracy is in motion—one that will prevent minority youth from securing government jobs. A new requirement mandating written examinations in Konkani in Devanagari script will be a devastating blow to the very community that shed blood to make Konkani Goa's official language

- Tomazinho Cardozo  
Former Speaker

with a small percentage of Hindus, supported Konkani as the official language. A fierce language battle ensued, and many lives — especially those of Konkani-in-Roman-script supporters — were lost.

Throughout the agitation, we fought for the Konkani language. At no point was the issue of script raised. It was a fight for Konkani alone, not for any particular script.

However, when the Goa Of-

ficial Language Act of 1987 was passed, making Konkani the official language, 95% of Konkani supporters had little reason to celebrate. Instead, they mourned for two key reasons: The Act defined Konkani as 'Konkani in Devanagari script'. Marathi was granted near-equal status, as the Act stated that "Marathi shall also be used for all official purposes."

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