

HEARD IN THE HOUSE

“The Governor did not address the issues that were raised, and we walked out as a sign of protest. This was a spur-of-the-moment decision. The government is not serious about the pressing issues we face. The Opposition will push for a robust and transparent session calendar
— Yuri Alemao, Leader of the Opposition

“Police have already arrested 43 accused so far in the job scam. In these cases, property such as vehicles, gold ornaments, bank accounts and other articles have been seized by the police. Already, three cases have been charge sheeted and are pending trials in the court
— P S Sreedharan Pillai, Goa Governor

“There is another session in the month of March. It is not that the Assembly is getting over in two days. This session has been approved by everybody in the Business Advisory Committee (BAC). The Opposition members staged a walkout because they wanted to show to the people that they are not happy
— Aleixo Sequeira, Environment Minister

“It is the first time in the history of the Goa Assembly that the Opposition leader did not accompany the Governor when he was leaving the House. The sanctity of the House needs to be maintained
— Pramod Sawant, Chief Minister

Govt set to ramrod five Bills during two-day Assembly session

The Bills will be passed without any debate, by suspending three rules that govern how Bills are enacted into laws; Opposition says hasty approach demeans democracy

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Goa government is set to bypass legislative procedures to pass five Bills, including a controversial amendment to the Code of Comunidades, during the final day of the shortest Assembly session. The amendment is poised to impose stringent restrictions on the use of Comunidade land, effectively banning any deviation from its original purpose.

The Bills, which will be fast-tracked through the House by suspending critical rules—141, 143, and 156, pertaining to the introduction, consideration, and passage of Bills—are being rushed without any debate. This decision has triggered outrage from Opposition members, who have ac-

SHOTGUN LEGISLATION?

BILLS TO BE FASTTRACKED IN THE GOA ASSEMBLY

► Amendment to the Code of Comunidades
► Goa Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Amendment Bill

► The Goa VAT (Amendment) Bill 2025
► Goa Goods and Services Tax (GST) (Amendment) Bill 2025
► The Goa Provision of Water Supply (Amendment) Bill

Govt is also likely to withdraw the Goa Media Persons and Media Institutions (Prevention of Violence and Damage or Loss to Property) Bill, 2022, which sought to protect journalists from violence

cused the government of undermining democratic norms. “The government is trying to bulldoze these Bills without any discussion, disrespecting the very foundation of our democracy,” they said.

The contentious Ordinance on the Code of Comunidades, introduced in October 2024 after Cabinet approval, is now being converted into law in this As-

sembly session. If passed, it will grant the Administrator of Comunidades unprecedented authority to impose restraining orders on land use. Under this new law, no authority—including the Town and Country Planning Department, Planning and Development Authority, Municipal Councils, Village Panchayats, or the Corporation of the City of Panaji (CCP)—will be

able to issue permissions, clearances, or No Objection Certificates (NOCs) for any land in question.

In addition to this highly contentious measure, the government plans to introduce and pass three more Bills, including the ‘Goa Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Amendment Bill.’ This Bill seeks to revive and extend provisional registrations for clinical es-

tablishments, following the government’s withdrawal of a similar amendment in August 2023.

Further, the Goa VAT (Amendment) Bill 2025, the Goa Goods and Services Tax (GST) (Amendment) Bill 2025, and the Goa Value Added Tax (Amendment) Bill 2025 are also set to be introduced, all during the same legislative session.

In a related move, the government is expected to withdraw the Goa Media Persons and Media Institutions (Prevention of Violence and Damage or Loss to Property) Bill, 2022, which sought to protect journalists from violence. The bill, introduced during the monsoon session of 2022, appears to have been shelved without explanation.

Governor updates Assembly on job scam arrests, traffic violations

Team Herald

PANJIM: Goa Governor P S Sreedharan Pillai informed the State Assembly on Thursday that 43 individuals have been arrested in connection with the job scam that surfaced in last year.

Addressing the House, the Governor stated, “My government has taken decisive action against individuals posing as agents for government jobs.” He added that all complaints received have been promptly converted into First Information Reports (FIRs). However, the Opposition did not seem convinced by the assurances in the Governor’s speech, and many of them walked out in protest, annoyed that he was not addressing any of the issues they had raised.

“Police have arrested 43 accused so far, and properties such as vehicles, gold ornaments, bank accounts, and other assets have been seized. Three of these cases have been charge-sheeted and are currently pending trial in court,” Pillai said. “The police have been given a free hand to work with relevant agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate and the Financial Intelligence Unit. Information has been shared with these agencies in 16 cases,” he noted.

The Governor also highlighted the government’s efforts to improve road safety, with special drives to address issues like drunken driving and over-speeding. A total of 4,91,796 traffic

CM slams Yuri for apparent disrespect to the House

PORVORIM: Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Thursday objected to Leader of the Opposition Yuri Alemao not accompanying him when the Governor was leaving the House, claiming that this was the first time such a thing had happened in the Goa Assembly. “Sanctity of the House should be maintained,” he said. Minister for Legislative Affairs Aleixo Sequeira said, “There is another session in the month of March. It is not that the Assembly is getting over in two days. This session has been approved by everybody in the Business Advisory Committee (BAC). It has been a unanimous decision. If the MLAs were not happy, they should have expressed their views in the BAC. The Opposition members staged a walkout because they wanted to show to the people that they are not happy.”

WRD Minister Subhash Shirodkar said, “The two-day session was called based on the deliberations done by Chief Minister and the Speaker.”

violations under the Motor Vehicles Act have been registered, resulting in a fine collection of Rs 29.28 crore as of November 2024.

Additionally, he reported that the construction of new police station buildings at Quepem, Fatorda, Maina-Curtorim, and an annex to the Coastal Security Police Station at Tiracol is underway at an estimated cost of Rs 36.23 crore. A new IRBn Camp has also been established near Canacona Police Station.

On women’s safety, the Governor shared that the Pink Force has responded to 5,387 calls related to women in distress and other emergencies. He also mentioned that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed with IIT Goa and BITS Pilani, Goa, to strengthen law

enforcement and cybersecurity efforts.

Pillai further noted that the Goa Staff Selection Commission has been set up to ensure a transparent and merit-based recruitment process for government jobs, thereby preventing fraudulent individuals from posing as government job agents.

In education, the Governor outlined that the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) will be completed by 2027-28. The next two years will focus on forming clusters and restructuring institutions where necessary to meet this goal. He also mentioned that in the current year, the implementation of NEP-2020 has continued for Balvatika – II in the Foundational Stage and Grade IX in the Secondary Stage.

Tivim child abuse: Accused threatened mother, lured other kids too, says NGO

Team Herald

MARGAO: NGO Bailancho Ekvott on Thursday urged the police to thoroughly investigate the child abuse case reported at Tivim railway station and take strict action against the accused.

Auda Viegas, President of Bailancho Ekvott, said the organisation spoke to the child and his mother, who revealed disturbing details about the alleged perpetrator.

According to Viegas, the accused would frequently pick up the child, take him home, and make him watch inappropriate videos, a clear violation of the Goa Children’s Act, 2023.

“The individual would take the child on his bike, bring him home, and even place him on his shoulders to pick fruits,” Viegas stated.

She further alleged that the perpetrator lured other children

to his house, exploiting them under the pretext of bike rides. In some instances, the victim was allegedly forced to consume bitter, intoxicating drinks and was beaten when he resisted or asked to go home.

Viegas also raised concerns about threats received by the child’s mother, warning her against pursuing the case. The caller reportedly claimed to have financial and political influence over the investigation.

“These threats may be linked to individuals whose homes the accused frequently visited with the child,” she added.

Calling for a thorough probe, Viegas stressed the need for immediate intervention to protect vulnerable children, especially marginalized, migrant, or at-risk children. She cited past cases, including the Freddy Peats child abuse scandal, urging authorities to take swift and decisive action.

FEAST FOR CROWS

ANISHA FRANCIS



Crows feed on small fish, jellyfish and other discards deemed unfit to sell, as fishermen at Colva prepare to venture into the sea again for a second catch

Aquem panchas seek to oust Sarpanch through no-trust motion

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a political development, five panchas from the Aquem Baixo village panchayat have submitted a petition seeking to move a no-confidence motion against Sarpanch Florinho ‘Danny’ Fernandes.

In their petition to the Salcete Block Development Office (BDO) and panchayat secretary, the group shared their grievances, saying, “The Sarpanch is having lack of trans-

parency and accountability in the functioning of the Aquem-Baixo village panchayat. The Sarpanch also failed in concern to fair allocation of resources, decision-making processes and open communication with the other panchayat members and the public.”

The petitioners - Inacio Dias, Pooja Naik, Avinash Sardessai, Natasha Dias, and Amisha Tile - have requested a special general body meeting under Section 51 (2) of

the Goa Panchayat Raj Act, 1994, to discuss and vote on the no-confidence motion.

It may be recalled that Florinho was elected as the Sarpanch in August 2024, but there was considerable political tension at that time too.

During that election, there was a tie, meaning both Florinho and the rival candidate Pooja Naik had secured four votes each. The impasse was ultimately resolved through a lot-drawing procedure that favoured Florinho.

Locals demand action against illegal hawkers littering bypass at Nuvem

Team Herald

MARGAO: Residents of Nuvem have raised concerns over the growing nuisance caused by illegal sugarcane and fruit juice vendors operating along the roadside of the Western Bypass at Rumdier-Nuvem.

Locals complain that these vendors operate without proper permits and indiscriminately dump waste into nearby open fields, creating serious health hazards.

Despite the recent opening of the Western Bypass, the area remains poorly lit at night due to non-functional streetlights, further enabling illegal vendors to litter the roadside and surrounding agricultural fields.

“The stink in the area is overwhelming, and it’s clear that waste dumping has been happening for quite some time. These vendors operate without any licence or oversight from the authorities
— Santan Fernandes, Nuvem local

“The stink in the area is overwhelming, and it’s clear that waste dumping has been happening for quite some time,” said Santan Fernandes, a local resident. He stressed that these vendors lack approval from authorities and continue to

operate unchecked. Other residents echoed similar frustrations. “After finishing their business, these vendors simply leave their waste behind. It’s disheartening that local and highway authorities allow such illegal activities on a major road,” one resident said.

They also highlighted safety risks for riders, especially in dark, unlit areas where these vendors set up shop.

Residents are now demanding immediate action from local authorities. “If no action is taken, it will only lead to further degradation of agricultural fields and increased nuisance in the area,” they warned.

MAX. TEMP 32.6°C
MIN. TEMP 21.5°C

idharudhar



Not a bribe! Just recovering what I paid you for this post

Government launches award to inspire students to solve real-world problems

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Goa government has unveiled the Goa Young Innovator’s Award (GYIA) 2024-25, a new initiative designed to foster creativity and problem-solving skills among school students. The competition, established by the Goa State Innovation Council (GSInC) under the Department of Science, Technology & Waste Management, provides a platform for young minds to present innovative solutions to real-world challenges.

At a press conference held in Fatorda, Ankit Yadav, Director of Science, Technology & Waste Management, stressed the importance of nurturing innovation from an early age. “Innovation is



the backbone of progress, and it is crucial that we instill the spirit of creativity in our students,” he said, adding that with proper guidance and support, young ideas have the potential to become transformative solutions.

The official launch took place at Don Bosco College of Engineering, Fatorda,

with GSInC Chairman Jose Manuel Noronha, Yadav, and the college’s Director, Fr Kinley D’Cruz, in attendance. The competition is open to students in two categories: Classes VIII to IX and Classes V to VII. To encourage participation, cash prizes will be awarded to the top three winners in each category: Rs 20,000 for first place, Rs

10,000 for second place, and Rs 5,000 for third place. In addition, the best projects will receive mentorship and access to innovation facilities, allowing students to further develop their ideas with expert guidance.

During the event, Noronha highlighted the concern over India’s low patent filings compared to countries like

China, which files 1.6 million patents annually, while India only sees about 50,000.

Projects submitted for the competition will be evaluated based on originality and practical applicability. Schools, teachers, and parents are encouraged to motivate students to participate. An exhibition will be held to showcase the students’ innovations, inspiring future participants. Applications for the award can be submitted online at www.goastateinnovationcouncil.com/initiatives/GYIA, with the deadline set for February 28, 2025. Winners will be announced in March. For further details, participants can contact the Goa State Innovation Council at 0832 274 0007 or admin@gasic.in.

Labourer crushed to death at construction site

VASCO: Lalsun Ali, 19, a labourer was crushed to death at a railway construction site at Shantinagar, Vasco. The incident occurred behind the Kabrastan, where concrete mixing work was carried out and construction material was dumped at the site and an Ajax mixer truck was being used for mixing purpose. The police have revealed that the mixer truck’s bucket was damaging cement bags kept near the metal stone heap and in an attempt to keep them aside, Ali slipped and accidentally came under the bucket. The sharp edge of the bucket caused a fatal injury, decapitating him on the spot.

The police stated that the cause of death was due to ‘exsanguination and traumatic transection of the cervical spinal cord due to decapitation’.