

In Cong-AAP face-off, Oppn is the big loser

Both parties claim they can go it alone in Assembly, but admit that consolidation of votes crucial to take on the BJP

Team Herald

PANJIM: The battle rout in Delhi has left the two IN-DIA bloc partners – Congress and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) – picking up the pieces in Goa and it's not a pretty picture. Leaders of both Opposition parties are speaking openly about going it alone even as they acknowledge that an alliance that will help consolidate the Opposition vote is the only way to take on the BJP in the 2027 State elections.

However, both parties maintain that a decision on alliances will be taken by the national leadership in due course.

When contacted, Goa Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) senior vice president M K Shaikh said, "Why should we think of an alliance now? We are strengthening the party organisation. Congress has its footprint in all 40 Assembly segments with a sizeable number of workers and voters, and Salcete taluka is the strongest among all."

Shaikh said, "AAP leaders should not have targeted AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi during campaigning for Delhi Assembly

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– M K Shaikh, GPCC senior vice president

It was almost 25 years ago when Congress last won the Benaolim seat. We are competent to fight elections single-handedly, but the alliance is the aspiration of the people of Goa

– Adv Amit Palekar, AAP State president

We are prepared to fight elections on our own strength. But people of Goa are waiting for an alliance to defeat BJP and Congress has to seriously think about it

– Cruz Silva, AAP Velim MLA

elections. If AAP's enemy is BJP, then they should have thought of it before attacking the Congress leaders."

GPCC vice president Sunil Kawthekar said, "Decision on forging alliances with the like-minded parties will be taken by the High Command and it is not decided locally. But if you analyse the results of 2022 Goa Assembly elections, BJP came to power by polling 35 per cent of vote share, while

Pre-poll alliances and seat sharing is mainly decided by the High Command and only fine-tuning is done by taking the local leaders into confidence

– Sunil Kawthekar, GPCC vice president

the divided Opposition had secured 65 per cent of vote share. We lost many Assembly seats by slender margins. Political parties should not allow it to happen."

"Looking at the manner in which the BJP is going to elections, it is necessary that the political parties should look at a larger picture and work as a united front," Kawthekar said.

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SAFETY LAST

JOSEPH FERNANDES



A worker carries out a maintenance job atop an electric pole without wearing any safety gear or a helmet, while two linemen on the ground casually observe from a distance at Porvorim, on Tuesday. The picture highlights a lack of adherence to essential safety protocols and utter disregard for life

Insta Teen Accounts with more supervision in India

PTI, NEW DELHI: Meta on Tuesday announced it is expanding Instagram Teen Accounts to India that will ensure built-in protection for young users of this cohort, with features that limit unwanted interactions, enhance privacy settings, provide greater parental oversight,

and places teens automatically and, by default, in the highest safety settings.

To ensure that teens receive protection and do not bypass age restrictions, Instagram is strengthening age verification measures, Meta said.

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Smart City buses forgot the disabled, elderly and women

Why no reserved seats in a section of KTC's EV fleet, ask activists

ANIL KUMAR MISHRA
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PANJIM: Launched with much fanfare under the Smart City mission, the EV buses plying on Panjim's pot-holed roads has one crucial omission that seems to have missed the eyes of the authorities who like to showcase them as the pride of the Capital's public transport system. Of the 48-odd buses, at least 16 have no seats reserved for women, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities (PwDs).

O HERALDO SPECIAL REPORT

Responding to O Herald's questions, Kadamba Transport Corporation Limited (KTCL) officials admitted that many of these buses have no designated seats for above categories of passengers. KTCL's Divisional Traffic Officer, Roque Luis, said, "We have found that seats are not reserved in 16 buses. We have taken up the issue with the company. Now the seats will be reserved in those buses as well on priority."

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– Roque Luis, KTCL's Divisional Traffic Officer

"Persons with disabilities have a multi-purpose unique disability identity (UDID) card, issued by the Centre. While they possess this card, why are they forced to make another card for using these buses?"

– Prakash W Kamat, member, Goa State Advisory Board on Disability

PICS: UPENDRA NAIK



"The buses have ramps, but the bus drivers do not use these ramps for persons with disabilities. The seats should be reserved for persons with disabilities"

– Avelino de Sa, Disability Rights Association of Goa (DRAG) president



Trouble mounts for Allahbadia, Mumbai cyber cell files FIR

AGENCY, MUMBAI: Mumbai police have registered an FIR against YouTube reality show India's Got Latent and its host Ranveer Allahbadia for allegedly making crude and obscene comments. The Maharashtra Cyber Department took suo moto action, filing the case under the IT Act and ordering the removal of all 18 episodes of the show.

Allahbadia, along with social media personalities Samay Raina, Ashish Chanchlani, Apoorva Mukhija, and Jaspreet Singh, is accused of using inappropriate language.

Multiple complaints have been filed in Mumbai, Guwahati, and Indore, with summonses issued to around 30 guests from the show. The National Commission for Women (NCW) has also summoned Allahbadia and others for a hearing on February 17, expressing serious concerns over the content.

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Untapped deep-sea fishing grounds off Goa-Kerala coast

Team Herald

PANJIM: In a significant discovery, the Fishery Survey of India (FSI) has identified several highly productive, unexplored fishing grounds in the Arabian Sea between Goa and Kerala.

The expedition, conducted aboard a deep-sea trawler operated by FSI, covered a vast area from Kollam, Kerala, to Goa. Surveying depths between 300 and 540 meters, the team discovered highly productive fishing zones approximately 100-120 nautical miles off India's western coast. The average catch per unit effort (CPUE) was recorded at an impressive 150-300 kg/hr,

BIG CATCH

- New fishing grounds located 100-120 nautical miles off the western coast of India, from Kollam (Kerala) to Goa
- Average catch per unit effort (CPUE) of 150-300 kg/hr

with no significant difference in catch volume or species diversity between day and night operations.

The newly discovered grounds are rich in commercially valuable crustaceans such as Humpback nylon shrimp, Arabian red shrimp, Deepwater spiny lobster, and deep-sea squat lobster. Cephalopod

resources, including Opisthoteuthis and Octopoteuthis species, were also abundant.

Additionally, the grounds support a wide variety of fish species, including Froghead eel, Rosy cod, Sackfish, Snake mackerel, Splendid alfonsino, and Shadow driftfish.

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Trump halts foreign bribery law used against Adani in US

PTI, WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump signed an executive order directing the Department of Justice to pause enforcing a nearly half-century-old law that was used to launch a bribery investigation against the Adani Group.

Trump signed an order to pause enforcing of the 1977 Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) that prohibits American companies and foreign firms from bribing officials of foreign governments to obtain or retain business.

The President directed US

Attorney General Pam Bondi to pause enforcement of FCPA, which was at the heart of some of the US Department of Justice's most high-profile cases, including an indictment against Indian billionaire and Adani Group head Gautam Adani and his nephew Sagar.

Last year DoJ under President Joe Biden charged Adani for allegedly being part of a scheme to pay over \$250 million (about Rs 2,100 crore) bribe to Indian officials in exchange of favourable terms for solar power contracts.

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Six US Congressmen question Adani indictment

PTI, WASHINGTON: As many as six US Congressmen have written to the newly appointed Attorney General of the United States against 'questionable' decisions made by the US Department of Justice (DoJ) such as the indictment against the Adani Group in an alleged bribery scam, which 'jeopardises the relationship with close ally India'. "Some of these decisions involved selectively pursuing and abandoning cases, often acting against America's interests at home and abroad, jeopardising relationships with close allies like India," the Congressmen said in the joint letter. India, they said, has been an important ally of the United States for decades.

MAX. TEMP 35.5 °C
MIN. TEMP 22.2 °C

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Trance fest nightmare at Dream Beach turtle site

Equipment has arrived and tickets selling for Rs 8k online, but authorities claim no permission given

AUGUSTO RODRIGUES

VAGATOR, GOA: Dream Beach in Vagator, a known nesting site for the endangered Olive Ridley turtles, is in the eye of a storm with a six-day trance music festival titled Karacus Marakus ready to be held on its sands from February 14 to 19.

Curiously, while equipment for the festival has already arrived, all authorities – the police, the forest department, and tourism department officials – claimed no permission had been given for Karacus Marakus. This, even as the event's poster does the rounds on social media tickets sell for Rs 3,500-8,000 online.

Suraj Gawas, Police Inspector at Anjuna Police Station,

confirmed that no permission has been granted for the event. "We have received no request for permission for such an event, and there is no question of granting approval for it at a turtle nesting site," Gawas stated.

The controversy has sparked outrage, with critics pointing to the event's potential environmental impact. "This is not just noise pollution – it's a direct threat to the habitat of the Olive Ridley turtles, which are a protected species under Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. The audacity of



the organiser to choose this location highlights the precarious law-and-order situation," said Desmond D'Souza, an activist against noise pollution.

Foreign tourists visiting the area expressed their dismay, with one saying, "It's painful to see that heavy equipment has been brought onto the beach and a massive stage built in an area that is marked as a turtle nesting site. The noise and the vehicles will surely prevent the turtles from coming ashore to lay their eggs."

Five Olive Ridesley laid eggs here in February, while 10 others returned without nesting, according to reports.

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– Desmond D'Souza, noise pollution activist

"We have received no request for permission for such an event, and there is no question of granting approval for it at a turtle nesting site"

– Suraj Gawas, Anjuna PI

No requests for any festivals or parties have been submitted to us

– Kedar Naik, Director of Tourism

"We have been made aware of the event and are keeping an eye on the situation. The arrival of such heavy equipment at surely could disturb the turtles, especially since some have already returned without nesting"

– Atmaram Gauns, Range Forest Officer, Wildlife