

shorttakes**MINOR GIRL KIDNAPPED IN CUNCOLIM, COPS ON LOOK-OUT FOR ACCUSED**

MARGAO: The Cuncolim police have filed an FIR against an unknown accused for allegedly kidnaping a minor girl. According to police, a complaint was filed by the girl's mother, following which an offence under Section 137(2) BNS and Section 8(2) of the Goa Children's Act has been registered. The incident occurred on February 12, at 10.30 am when an unknown person came on a scooter and took the girl away from her residence. The girl's parents were at their workplace when the incident occurred. Police have circulated the girl's description across Goa and neighbouring states via wireless messages and have alerted railway stations in the region. The case is being investigated by PSI Sudan Bhosale of Cuncolim police station.

ACCIDENT VICTIM SUCCUMBS TO INJURIES AT GMC

MARGAO: Prakash alias Virbahadur Fernandes, a native of Uttar Pradesh residing in Santimol-Raia, succumbed to injuries sustained in an accident while undergoing treatment at Goa Medical College (GMC), Bambolim. Maina-Curtorim police stated that they received a wireless message from GMC's casualty department about the victim's death. Investigations revealed that Fernandes was involved in a self-accident at Sonsodo Junction on February 9, resulting in grievous injuries. Police conducted an inquest and referred the body for post-mortem examination. The autopsy confirmed that the cause of death was "cranio-cerebral damage due to blunt force impact." LPSI Sonal Gounkar of Maina-Curtorim police station is conducting further investigations.

VERLA COMUNIDADE FILES COMPLAINT AGAINST ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTION

CALANGUTE: The attorney of the Verla Comunidade, Gajanan Chatim, has lodged a complaint with the Verla-Canca panchayat regarding illegal construction in agricultural fields belonging to the comunidade. The unauthorised activity was spotted on Sunday, prompting Chatim to call Mapusa police, who arrived at the site and halted the work. The Verla-Canca panchayat has acknowledged the complaint, and the sarpanch has scheduled a site inspection on February 14 at 11 am.

DECOMPOSED BODY OF ORLIM RESIDENT FOUND

MARGAO: The partially decomposed body of Laurente Afonso, a resident of Sambatty Orlim-Salcete, was found inside his house. Colva police confirmed. Investigations revealed that Afonso lived alone. Police conducted a scene of occurrence panchanama and referred the body to the District Hospital in Margao for a post-mortem examination. The autopsy report has kept the cause of death pending, with viscera preserved for chemical analysis. Colva police stated that they received a phone call from PCR Panjim reporting that a male resident of Sambatty-Orlim had locked himself inside his house for three days and was unresponsive.

'KELYANCHI ZATRA' TO BEGIN ON FEBRUARY 17 IN CALANGUTE

CALANGUTE: The annual zatra of Shree Dev Babreshwar, popularly known as 'Kelyanchi Zatra', will commence on February 17, in Khobrawaddo-Calangute. This year marks the 61st celebration of the zatra, during which a new idol of Dev Babreshwar will be installed, committee members announced. "Many foreign tourists attend the zatra every year. It should be promoted as a Goan cultural festival by the tourism department to highlight the state's cultural heritage," a committee member said.

FREE MEDICAL CHECK-UPS FOR CALANGUTE RESIDENTS

CALANGUTE: Residents of the Calangute constituency can avail themselves of free home medical check-ups by specialists from GMC and Goa Dental College and Hospital, as part of an initiative by the Directorate of Health Services. Registration will take place at the Calangute sub-health centre on Sunday, February 16, from 9 am to 11.30 am. Residents must bring their Aadhaar card and phone number to enrol.

FIRE BREAKS OUT AT SUPERMARKET AT PIRNI IN VERNA

MARGAO: A devastating fire broke out at a supermarket in Pirni-Verna, on Wednesday morning, causing significant damage to goods and property. The fire reportedly began around 5 am, quickly spreading across the premises. Fire officers from Verna responded promptly, and reinforcements were called from Margao. Despite the scale of the fire, they managed to save property worth approximately Rs 6 lakh. The fire was finally brought under control after two hours, with no casualties reported. The cause of the fire is still under investigation, though a short circuit is suspected. Verna police have also launched their own inquiry into the incident.

JUDGEMENT IN 2017 IRISH TOURIST MURDER CASE POSTPONED

MARGAO: The Additional District and Sessions Judge, Margao, has postponed the judgement in the 2017 rape and murder case of 28-year-old Irish-British national Danielle McLaughlin to Friday. The case was heard on Thursday by Judge Kshama Joshi. McLaughlin was found dead in a forested area of Canacona on March 14, 2017. Vikat Bhagat, now 31, a local resident, was arrested for her rape and murder and is currently lodged at Central Jail, Colvale. Canacona police had filed a 374-page chargesheet against Bhagat, then 24, with statements from 68 witnesses. The chargesheet stated that Bhagat, who was known to the victim, took her to an isolated spot at Devabag, sexually assaulted her, and hit her on the face with glass bottles before strangling her. She was also struck with a stone, leading to her death. Bhagat has been charged under Sections 302 (murder), 376 (rape), 394 (robbery), and 201 (destruction of evidence) of the Indian Penal Code.

POWER SHUTDOWN

TALEIGAO: On February 14, from 9 am to 2 pm. Affected areas are Serenity building and surrounding areas at Taleigao. **BICHOILIM:** On February 14 and 16, from 9 am to 2 pm. Affected areas are Muslimwada, Vasudevsnagar, near rolling mill, Hill View, Sai service and surrounding areas. **CANACONA:** On February 14, from 8 am to 5 pm. Affected areas are entire village Panchayat Loliem- Polem and village Panchayat Poinguinim at Canacona.

Curti-Khandepar VP inspects alleged illegal construction

Foundation for 34 columns laid for monstrous structure; developer plays truant

Team Herald

PONDA: Locals in Curti have alleged that a major illegal construction project has been undertaken by an unknown individual without obtaining permission from the Curti-Khandepar Panchayat.

Following a complaint lodged by local social worker Rocky Dias, a site inspection was conducted on Thursday by Sarpanch Abhijeet Gaude, local panch Bhika Kerkar, the Panchayat Secretary, and the complainant.

Dias expressed concern



PICS: SANTOSH NAIK

over the site inspection being carried out in the absence of the building owner. He added that workers fled the site upon learning of the Panchayat's inspection. "This appears to be a

major construction project by an unknown individual, with 34 columns already installed for the under-construction building," Dias stated.

"Unchecked construc-



tion activities in a no-development zone, particularly near hills and open spaces, could have severe environmental consequences. The recent hill-cutting activities had

led to wild bison being spotted in residential areas. This area is classified as a No Development Zone according to the regional plan," Dias added, urging the Panchayat to take im-

mediate action.

When questioned about the issue, Sarpanch Abhijeet Gaude confirmed that the construction was illegal. "Action will be taken in the forthcoming Panchayat body meeting after discussion," he stated. "The individual responsible for the illegal construction has not yet been identified a notice has been pasted at the construction site."

During the inspection, officials discovered that the foundation for 34 columns had already been laid for the structure.

SEASONAL SCOURGE



UPENDRA NAIK

A black oily substance, possibly tar, has washed up along the Miramar-Caranzalem beach stretch, sparking concerns over health risks and potential harm to marine life

NFF flays Union Budget for neglecting traditional fishermen

Team Herald

PANJIM: The National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) has slammed Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, for presenting Union Budget without offering no direct benefits to the country's small-scale fishers.

In a statement, NFF general secretary Olencio Simoes alleged that the government is shifting focus away from marine fisheries to non-fishers and aquaculture.

Calling the Union budget a mockery of traditional fishers, Simoes pointed out that the only fisheries-related provisions in the budget was reduction in basic customs duty (BCD) on frozen fish paste (suri-

Unregulated fishing within 12 nautical miles, combined with the government's increased focus on the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and high seas, could displace small-scale fishers and encourage industrial fishing in deeper waters

— Olencio Simoes, NFF General Secretary

mi) from 30 per cent to 5 per cent and a BCD reduction on fish hydrolysate for shrimp and fish feed from 15 per cent to 5 per cent.

"Unregulated fishing within 12 nautical miles, combined with the government's increased focus on the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and high seas, could displace small-scale fishers and encourage industrial fishing in deeper waters," said Simoes

Highlighting the challeng-

es faced by small-scale fishers, Simoes pointed out that they were caught between arrests by Sri Lankan and Pakistani navies and Chinese boats entering Indian waters and depleting fish stocks.

Expressing concerns over destructive fishing practices such as bull trawling and LED light fishing, which are forcing traditional fishers to venture further into the ocean, the NFF demanded an increase in diesel, kerosene, and petrol subsidies.

GFP chief calls cash-for-jobs scam 'Goa's Vyapam', demands CM's resignation

Team Herald

PANJIM: Goa Forward Party (GFP) president Vijai Sardesai has termed the cash-for-jobs scam as 'Goa's Vyapam Scam', alleging that people have died due to it. He has demanded that Chief Minister Pramod Sawant step down immediately, stating that the he has no right to continue in office.

Sardesai also accused the ruling BJP government of orchestrating a character assassination campaign against him through fringe social media elements.

"In my entire political ca-

reer, I have never seen criminals being used to target political opponents. This could become a dangerous precedent where criminals are deployed to silence opposition leaders," he said.

He further alleged that Goa Police were colluding with criminals, accepting hafta (bribes), and enabling wrongdoings by the government.

Commenting on Suleman Siddiqui's escape from custody, Sardesai criticised the state's response.

"We had filed an unstarred Legislative Assembly Question (LAQ), and the reply we received stated

that the place where Suleman was held was not even a lock-up. This is the official response from the Home Minister of Goa," he said.

He warned that if Director General of Police (DGP) fails to provide an answer, the matter will be escalated to the Union Home Minister.

"There needs to be accountability and answers. The Goa Police are under pressure and have not taken any action against the real accused," he asserted.

Sardesai further alleged that the Chief Minister fabricated evidence against him. "The case against me,

from Fatorda to London, has been fabricated and the CM is behind it," he said.

Addressing the alleged phone call from jail, where Suleman Siddiqui named him and Amit Palekar, Sardesai said,

"Siddiqui may turn around and deny his claims later. My biggest concern is that he may change his version again. Criminals targeting opposition leaders should not be normalised, especially by the media. Why is it that only those who speak against the government's wrongdoings are being targeted?"

TCP asks MPDA to verify GBA plaint

Team Herald

VASCO: Cortalim MLA Anton Vas on Thursday asked the builder to reopen access road near Zuarinagar post office, Sancoale up to Velsao. He also instructed the Mormugao Planning and Development Authority (MPDA) to keep all project approvals on hold until the issues raised by the locals were resolved.

Following growing concerns from locals over the closure of the access by fencing the area, Vas conducted a joint inspection along with MPDA officials, Sancoale village panchayat secretary and the agitated residents.

Vas informed the villagers that he had written to authorities including

the Chief Town Planner, MPDA, Deputy Collector, TCP Minister Vishwajit Rane, and local village panchayat, seeking their intervention.

According to Vas, the builder had applied to the MPDA for land amalgamation, construction of a compound wall and road realignment approvals. He assured the villagers that their concerns would be prioritised.

Sancoale panchayat secretary Orville C Vales said that the issue would be placed in the next monthly panchayat meeting on Tuesday, February 18, where a decision on removing the fencing would be discussed.

Former Velsao-Pale-Issorcim panchayat member demanded that

the access road leading to the Velsao-Bellem area, the Post Office and Holy Cross be restored.

Selwyn Querobino Sa Rebello, a resident of Velsao-Pale said that he had written to all the authorities regarding the unlawful blocking of the public road. He said that the Zuari Agro Chemicals Ltd had sold the property to a builder, who was attempting to develop the land by blocking the access road which was connecting Zuarinagar and Velsao and used by the adjoining residents and general public.

Meanwhile, the TCP Dept has directed the MPDA to verify the allegations made by GBA regarding the Bhutani Infra project at Savorfond, Sancoale.

Manohar International Airport bags 'Sarvashrestha Suraksha Puraskaar'

Team Herald

PANJIM: Manohar International Airport (GOX), developed and operated by GMR Goa International Airport Ltd (GIAL), has been honoured with the 'Sarvashrestha Suraksha Puraskaar' (Golden Trophy) at the National Safety Council of India (NSCI) Safety Awards 2024 under the Service Sector category. The award was presented at a ceremony held in January 2025 at a hotel in Mumbai.

The National Safety Council of India (NSCI), established by the Ministry of Labour, Government of India, invited entries

from organisations across the country to recognise excellence in Occupational Safety and Health (OSH). The awards aim to acknowledge efforts in reducing workplace injuries, implementing best OSH practices, and promoting continuous improvements in safety standards.

Manohar International Airport was assessed based on safety performance, statistics, commitment, awareness, training, promotional activities, and on-ground innovations.

Commenting on the achievement, R V Sheshan, CEO of GMR Goa International Airport, said:

"The Sarvashrestha Suraksha Pu-

raskaar reflects the commitment of Manohar International Airport's employees and partners in creating a safe and healthy work environment. It is an excellent example of GMR Group's culture of safety. We know that safety is not a destination, it's a journey."

He added, "There is no silver bullet when it comes to delivering sustained, excellent safety results. It takes tremendous effort and determination from everyone at the airport to become safety ambassadors and maintain a workplace of this standard. This award motivates us to continue improving and setting new safety benchmarks."

APPOINTMENTS



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