

HIGH DRAMA AT CITY COURT AS SIDDIQUI BREACHES SECURITY

Hands over letter containing explosive content against govt & police; men-in-uniform fail to confiscate letter, which is later accessed by journalists

Team Herald

PANJIM: A high-voltage drama unfolded at Altinho on Wednesday, as the lack of discipline and protocol enforcement within the Goa Police once again came to the fore when Siddiqui, alias Suleman Khan, an accused in high-profile land grab cases who had broken out of lockup in December, handed over a letter to the media containing explosive allegations against top government and police officials while being produced before the Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) Panjim, raising serious concerns about the security lapses in handling high-risk criminals. The police desperately tried to confiscate Suleman's letter, but by then, its entire contents had been accessed by journalists. As soon as news broke



Siddiqui hands over a letter to the media containing explosive allegations against govt & police officials

that Siddiqui's letter accused several senior officials of misconduct, the police rushed to cover his face and escort him out under heavy security. The situation escalated to the point that North Goa Superintendent of Police (SP) Akshat Kaushal had to personally intervene and provide additional security cover to the accused.

Later explaining the heightened security, SP Kaushal said, "Siddiqui is accused of serious crimes and has previously escaped from custody. As per Supreme Court guidelines, it is our responsibility to ensure that such a criminal is safeguarded while being produced in court."

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I AM BEING FALSELY LABELLED A 'HABITUAL OFFENDER': SIDDIQUI

- In a letter addressed to the Judge of the JMFC Court in Panjim, Siddiqui claimed that CM falsely labelled him a "habitual offender" in the media
- Asserted he remains innocent until proven guilty and warned of legal action if further allegations appear
- Requested a compromise, detailing shocking claims of abuse of power by political figures and law enforcement officials
- Asserted that the allegations against him are politically motivated and that he is being used as a scapegoat to divert attention from a larger "cash-for-govt-jobs" scam
- Called for an independent probe by the CBI to ensure justice

PRAYER AND PENANCE



An archbishop applies ash on a devotee's forehead on Ash Wednesday, observed by Catholics, at Santhome Cathedral Basilica in Chennai

Attacked by patient in US, Indian-origin nurse could turn blind

PTI, HOUSTON: A 67-year-old Indian-origin nurse was repeatedly punched in the face by a patient at a Florida hospital in a possible hate crime that could lead to her losing her eyesight, local media has reported.

Nurse Leela Lal, also known as Leelamma Lal, was assaulted and "every bone of her face broken" by Stephen Eric Scantlebury, a 33-year-old patient she was tending to in the psychiatric ward at the Palms West Hospital in West Palm Beach, Florida on February 18, police said.

In a local court, a police officer testified that a video clip showed Scantlebury saying, "Indians are bad" and "I just beat the (expletive) out of an Indian doctor," news channel WPTV.com said. Scantlebury faces a charge of attempted second-degree murder in the attack and also faces a hate crime enhancement, which could result in harsher penalties if he is convicted, the media said.

WPTV.com reported after the incident that HCA Florida HealthCare, which runs the Palm West Hospital, said the attack occurred "within a matter of seconds" and was "witnessed by multiple people" and added that Lal was taken by helicopter to St Mary's Medical Centre in West Palm Beach.

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Political slugfest after Madkaikar's bribery charge on State minister

Oppn demands FIR; govt dares former MLA to file a police complaint

Team Herald

PANJIM: A day after BJP leader and former State minister Pandurang Madkaikar made sensational claims about ministers collecting money, Opposition parties upped the ante on corruption, demanding an investigation into the allegations and an FIR against an unnamed minister.

Apart from alleging corruption within government departments, Madkaikar had also claimed that he had paid Rs 15-20 lakh to a minister's team to get some work done, though he has refused to name the politician so far.

Goa Forward Party (GFP) President and Fatorda MLA Vijai Sardesai called for transparency, insisting that authorities must act swiftly. He stated, "If no



action is taken, it will signify that corruption is not only rampant but has been normalized under the BJP government." Sardesai further warned that failure to initiate an inquiry would indicate that bribery is institutionalised, with no one, including BJP leaders, exempt from paying bribes. He also criticised a recent statement from a BJP minister, who allegedly resorted to veiled threats instead of

addressing the matter at hand. "This is not just an irresponsible comment, it's a direct threat that needs to be investigated," Sardesai added. He pointed out that Madkaikar's claims, made during the visit of BJP central leader BL Santosh, exposed the depth of corruption within the party's Goa government. He stated that the government had silenced the Opposition "while continuing its own corrupt practices". Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Goa President Amit Palekar accused the BJP government of double standards in dealing with FIR registrations. Palekar highlighted the swift police action against protesters in Porvorim, but pointed out the inaction regarding Madkaikar's bribery claims.

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Parents keep up pressure to change school calendar

Say kids need time to de-stress; oppose after-school classes

Team Herald

PANJIM: A delegation of Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) members from different schools in Goa met Education Secretary Prasad Lolayekar at Porvorim on Wednesday and urged him to change the school opening dates from April to June. Speaking to reporters, Cecille Rodrigues said the parents explained to the Secretary that students will not get a break to de-stress if



schools open from April 1. Rodrigues said that the parents also sought to know what would be taught to the students during the months of April and May, and suggested that activity-based education be made optional, so only students who are interested attend school can do so, and others are not forced to.

The parents also wanted clarity on the instructional hours.

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PARENTS' DEMANDS

- Parents sought to know what would be taught to the students during the months of April and May
- They suggested that activity-based education be made optional, so only students who are interested attend school can do so, and others are not forced to
- The parents also wanted clarity on the instructional hours.
- Parents also questioned the need for having an extra hour of classes for other sections of students, if the NEP bridge course is required only for the sixth standard

HERALD ASKS

- Why are students not getting a break in the hot summer month of April?
- Why should pupils not get a break after a long academic year to de-stress and spend time with their families?
- Will the focus on extra classes, will the students have enough time to focus on extra-curriculars?

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MAX. TEMP 36.8 °C
MIN. TEMP 23.8 °C

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Not wild animals - we fear the land mafia and builders!

Trump warns of reciprocal tariffs on India from April 2

India seeks diplomatic resolution after US Prez's announcement in Congress

PTI, NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON: With US President Donald Trump announcing the implementation of reciprocal tariffs from April 2, global trade tensions have escalated, raising concerns about a potential trade war.

In his latest salvo, the US president, while addressing a joint session of the Congress on Tuesday, mentioned India alongside the European Union, China and Canada for charging higher tariffs on American products.

In line with his 'America First' policy, Trump announced during the speech reciprocal tariffs from April 2 on numerous trading partners and nations that impose higher levies on imports from the United States.

He said other countries have used tariffs against the US for decades and now, it is "our turn" to start using them against those nations.

"On average, the European Union, China, Brazil, India, Mexico and Canada - have you heard of them? And countless other nations charge us tremendously higher tariffs than we charge them... It is very unfair. India charges us auto tariffs higher than 100%. China's average tariff on our products is twice what we charge them. And South Korea's average tariff is four times higher."

- Donald Trump, US President



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India is confident of finding a solution, people familiar with the matter said while referring to the commitment expressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Trump during their February 13 talks in Washington DC.

At the meeting, the two sides

agreed to negotiate a mega trade deal by the end of this year and set an ambitious target of \$500 billion in annual trade by 2030 to narrow the trade deficit.

"Recognising that this level of ambition would require new, fair-trade terms, the leaders announced plans to negotiate the first tranche of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) by fall of 2025," a joint statement on the Modi-Trump talks said.

To advance this innovative, wide-ranging BTA, the US and India will take an integrated approach to strengthen and deepen the bilateral trade across the goods and services sector, and work towards increasing market access, reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers, and deepening supply-chain integration, it said.

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Actor held with gold worth Rs 12.56 cr at B'luru airport: DRI

Assets worth Rs 4.73 cr found at Ranya Rao's residence

PTI, BENGALURU: Gold bars worth Rs 12.56 crore were seized from Kannada actor Ranya Rao at Kempegowda International Airport, following which searches were conducted at her residence and gold jewellery worth Rs 2.06 crore and Indian currency amounting to Rs 2.67 crore were also recovered, DRI said on Wednesday.

Rao is the stepdaughter of senior IPS officer Ramachandra Rao, a senior police official told PTI.

The DGP-rank officer is currently serving as the Chairman and Managing Director of the Karnataka State Police Housing and Infrastructure Development

Corporation Ltd, he added. The total seizure in the case stood at Rs 17.29 crore, including assets worth Rs 4.73 crore, marking a significant blow to organised gold smuggling networks.

According to DRI (Directorate of Revenue Intelligence) officials, the 14.2 kg haul is one of the largest gold seizures at Bengaluru airport in recent times.

In a statement, the Ministry of Finance said the DRI successfully intercepted a passenger carrying foreign-origin gold bars worth Rs 12.56 crore at Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru.

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