

EDUCATION DEPT TURNS INTO CENTRE OF PROTEST

Parents march to Porvorim against reopening of schools; want decision withdrawn; accuse government of kowtowing to Centre's 'diktats' on them; claim decision was taken without consulting them; complain of improper infrastructure in schools

Team Herald

PANJIM: Accusing the Goa government of imposing the Centre's 'diktats' on them, the aggrieved parents on Monday, protested at Directorate of Education, Porvorim, demanding that the decision to reopen the schools from April 1, 2025, be withdrawn immediately.

Speaking to mediapersons, Cecille Rodrigues, a parent, said, "The education officials have hurriedly pushed for the opening of the schools from April 1. In the Gazette Notification the Education Department has mentioned only five days. We are here because we are worried about the future of the children. No one was intimidated about the imposition of the new rule in the beginning of 2024. Even parents were

not intimidated during the second term also. But on January 31, 2025, a circular was issued stating that schools are going to reopen on April 1, 2025. Children are being given holidays for just two or three days which is wrong. Still we have not received proper justification why the schools will reopen soon after the examinations are over."

"The decision has been taken without consulting the parents. You can see the heat intensity in the month of March. Even principals from across the State have voiced their protest saying that they are not happy with the decision because infrastructure of the schools is insufficient. Water is not available in some government and government-aided schools,



Aggrieved parents protest at Directorate of Education, Porvorim, on Monday

nor do they have generators to provide electricity if the power goes off," she added.

"Power failure keeps happening. Many parents have booked their tickets to go to their villages and their hometowns. How are the parents - the working class people - supposed to pick up and drop their children? These are the problems which teachers,

parents and principals are facing. So our representation is that we are unhappy with what is happening," she said.

Seby Mascarenhas, another parent, said, "Last year on May 16, the Goa Board made a statement that due to rising temperatures as a result of global warming, the Goa Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education

"I just want to ask what has changed from last year to this year. At least there should be some application of mind to take such decisions. The decision has been taken in haste without consulting the parents"

— Seby Mascarenhas,

"The decision has been taken without consulting the parents. Even principals from across the State say that they are not happy with the decision because infrastructure of the schools is improper. Water is not available in some government and government-aided schools, nor do they have generators to provide electricity if the power goes off"

— Cecille Rodrigues, parent & activist

has decided to advance its Class X and XII public exams by three weeks. Board chairman Bhagirath Shetye had said that during the 2024 examina-

tions there were cases of some students complaining of uneasiness due to the intense heat."

Prasad Halankar said, "Question is for whom has the NEP been introduced. Basically we are the stakeholders but without taking us into confidence, the decision has been taken. This is absolutely wrong. Is the government really working for the interest of people or it is implementing decisions as per its whims and fancies? Decisions taken by the Centre are being simply bulldozed here."

Tony Cardozo said, "There are many schools in the State which lack fans, forget about air-conditioners. My request to those making decisions is that they should work even for a

single day without air-conditioners and then call children for extra classes." Meanwhile, a headmaster of a Ramnathi-based high school has written to the Education Director objecting to the proposal of reopening of the schools from April 1, 2025.

Dattatraya Naik, Headmaster, GVM's RPRS High School, Ramnathi, Bandora, has objected to proposed amendment to Rule 21 of Goa Education Rules 1986.

In a letter to the Education Director, Naik said, "The decision of reopening schools in April 2025 is taken in haste without any consultation with the stakeholders. Neither headmasters, teachers, parents nor management were taken into consideration before arriving at the decision."

GKF mission to promote Romi Lipi gets shot in the arm

Ajgaon Kendra vows support to fight the injustice meted out to Roman script

Team Herald

MARGAO: Ashirwad Kala Kendra, Ajgaon, has pledged its full support and cooperation to the Global Konkani Forum (GKF) in its mission to promote the overall development of Konkani in Roman script, particularly in its fight against the injustice meted out to Romi Lipi script under the State Official Language Act.

As part of its awareness programme, and to further strengthen the efforts of

the Global Konkani Forum, a meeting was held at the Kendra, Ajgaon-Shiroda, Vengurla.

GKF secretary Jose Salvador Fernandes shared the goals and objectives of the Forum, emphasising the injustice done to Konkani in Roman script under the current Act.

He explained that the forum is working on expanding its global network of Konkani in Roman script to advocate for the rights of the language, especially to secure its rightful place within the Act.

Edwin D'Souza, Founder President of Ashirwad Kala Kendra, highlighted that there is a strong interest in Konkani and its culture among the youth in Ajgaon. He mentioned that the Kendra is actively organising Konkani programmes to nurture the talent among the local youth.

GKF vice-president Francis Xavier Fernandes expressed satisfaction with the support offered by the Kendra and thanked them for their commitment to the cause.

HERITAGE AT RISK



WHO DUNNIT? Trees were cut and vegetation was cleared on the slope very close to historic Reis Magos Fort and Naval School in Verem

34-yr-old killed in road accident at Mollem

PONDA: Sanju Badinganwar, 34, native of Karnataka and currently residing at Maina-Curtorim passed away in an accident at Palaskatta Mollem at around 4.30 pm yesterday.

The helmet worn by him was found damaged into several pieces at site.

Sanju had gone to his native place at Karnataka and was returning with rice bag which was tied to his motorcycle. The locals as well police suspect either it may be case of self accident or may be hit and run case.

Pipeline damage leads to water shortage in Fatorda

Residents criticise PWD officials' negligence when it comes to ensuring continuous water supply

Team Herald

MARGAO: Voicing their frustration over the ongoing water shortage following a pipeline damage, the residents of Madel-Fatorda have accused the authorities of failing to take prompt action to repair the pipeline despite the issue persisting for the past two days.

They have complained that the pipeline damage, detected days ago, remains unresolved, causing hardship to the residents.



The residents have complained that the repair work on the damaged pipeline is moving at a snail's pace

Speaking to mediapersons, the residents criticised the authorities for carrying out the repair works which they claim are moving at a snail's pace.

"Not just in Madel, but in surrounding areas as well, people are facing immense difficulties due to the dam-

aged pipeline. We have reached out to officials to address the issue, yet the repairs are progressing at a slow pace, which only adds to our frustration," complained Milagres Fernandes, a resident.

Emphasising the authorities' failure to pinpoint the exact location of the damage, he said, "It's surprising that the PWD officials are quick to disconnect water supply for unpaid bills and yet display utter neglect

"Not just in Madel, but in surrounding areas as well, people are facing immense difficulties due to the damaged pipeline. We have reached out to officials to address the issue, yet the repairs are progressing at a slow pace, which only adds to our frustration"

— Milagres Fernandes, resident of Madel-Fatorda

when it comes to ensuring the continuous water supply."

Stating that the children are struggling on account of the water shortage, the residents demanded that the officials be present at the site and address the issue immediately.

Now, April 15 deadline for sopo tender at wholesale fish market

SGPDA chairman clarifies that restrictions which were part of the previous tender have been removed

Team Herald

MARGAO: The South Goa Planning and Development Authority (SGPDA) is gearing up once again to float the much-delayed tender for the collection of sopo at the Margao wholesale fish market after missing several deadlines.

SGPDA chairman Krishna Salkar informed O Herald that the tender will be floated by April 15.

This development comes following repeated delays. In December last year, Salkar had promised that the tender would be floated by mid-January.

However, when the SGPDA missed this self-imposed deadline, the chairman assured the media that the tender would be floated 'within days'. Unfortunately,

"There were some issues that need to be resolved, but all concerns have now been addressed. We have removed a few restrictions that were part of the previous tender. The SGPDA is preparing for the pre-bid meeting with potential bidders, noting that all necessary steps would fall into place once the tender is officially floated"

— Krishna Salkar, SGPDA Chairman

February passed without any significant progress, raising further concerns regarding the ongoing delays in the process.

In response to questions about the delay, Salkar explained that there were some issues that need to be resolved, but assured that all concerns have now been addressed.

"We have removed a few restrictions that were part

"As per the estimates prepared by SGPDA, the sopo collection from the wholesale fish market could generate a monthly revenue of up to Rs 33 lakh. By not floating the tender, they are missing out on this significant income"

— Milagres Fernandes, erstwhile sopo contractor

of the previous tender," he clarified and added that the SGPDA is preparing for the pre-bid meeting with potential bidders, noting that all necessary steps would fall into place once the tender is officially floated.

Salkar emphasised that the SGPDA has now completed all the required formalities, including securing the necessary government permissions.

However, the repeated missed deadlines have raised concerns, particularly among contractors, who had previously shown interest in bidding.

Erstwhile contractor Milagres Fernandes said, "As per the estimates prepared by SGPDA, the sopo collection from the wholesale fish market could generate a monthly revenue of up to Rs 33 lakh."

Enforce 73rd amendment to safeguard Goa's future: MP

Team Herald

MARGAO: South Goa Congress Member of Parliament (MP) Capt Viriato Fernandes on Monday urged the Centre to implement the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in Goa on priority to safeguard the State's future and uphold the principles of grassroots democracy.

Raising the urgent issue during the Zero Hour in Parliament on Monday, he emphasised the importance of empowering gram sabhas as the foundation of the Panchayati Raj system, as envisioned by the Act, to ensure democratic decentralisation and citizen participation in governance.

Fernandes highlighted the alarming disregard for gram sabha resolutions in Goa, particularly concerning land use laws. He criticised the State's move to

convert large-scale agricultural land, orchards, forests, and No Development Zones (NDZ) into settlements, despite resolutions passed by villagers. "These actions undermine local self-governance and threaten Goa's environment and heritage," he said.

The MP stressed that implementing the 73rd Amendment is crucial to prevent Goa's destruction especially amid concerns over the State being turned into a coal hub. He warned that ignoring local gram sabha resolutions and centralising decision-making could lead to irreversible damage to Goa's ecology and democratic fabric.

Enacted in 1992, the 73rd Amendment aims to decentralise power and resources to locally elected panchayats, empowering communities to govern themselves.



The allegations of theft of exam question papers by an Assistant Professor at Goa University have shaken the higher education system. Herald Media asked students, "Does the Goa University question paper theft scandal further erode the faith in the University exam system?" Here are their responses...

DOES THE ALLEGED GU QUESTION PAPER THEFT FURTHER ERODE FAITH IN THE UNIVERSITY EXAM SYSTEM?

"Yes, this was the main issue, that's why we are protesting. When such an incident happens, it does injustice to all students. It is a real injustice to those who really study well and work hard. Hence we have to come forward and highlight such issues, and all students should get justice. Due to his incident, the name of Goa University will get spoiled everywhere. This will impact the students as they pass out from Goa University. They will have difficulty in getting selected for jobs. So we have to know exactly what happened"

— Sanmaee Gauns, student

"Yes, 100%. If such incidents happen, the students lose faith in the system. For instance a student from Pernem comes to Goa University, reaches back at 7 pm, studies hard, answers the papers and gets a degree and the papers get leaked, students feel let down. We have demanded that strict action be taken and we have demanded that SOPs be put in place to avoid such incidents. Students have developed fear in their minds. We have demanded from the VC that they should take action before the incident happens. We have demanded a fact finding committee. We have demanded that the question papers should be kept in one place and will be distributed from there. Here someone keeps the question papers in his locker or anywhere else, so anyone can trespass (and take them). Hence we have demanded SOPs for examinations"

— Vinay Raut, student

"The hardworking students really prepare themselves for the examinations and they are fully prepared for the exams thinking that they will get good marks in the examinations. But these days such incidents happen that question papers get leaked. The hard work of those students who burn the midnight oil gets wasted. Such scammers emerge, leak the paper to their favourites, and they top the exams. So there is pressure on other students. This is completely wrong. We will keep fighting such issues. The system has to change and we have talked to the Vice Chancellor who has assured us action"

— Shubham Malik, student



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