

After High Court order, authorities swoop in, seal 67 structures at Agonda beach

Locals call decision 'unjust', claim ruling was based on incorrect information

Team Herald

PANJIM: Several commercial establishments in Agonda were sealed on Thursday after the High Court of Bombay at Goa directed the Deputy Collector to halt all business activities at 67 premises within 24 hours concerning large-scale unauthorised constructions in the area, a designated turtle nesting site.

Following the sealing of the establishments, authorities posted an official notice stating: "In compliance with the order passed by the High Court dated March 19, 2025, and as per the order issued by the Deputy Collector and Sub-Divisional Officer, Canacona taluka, South Goa, this property has been sealed."

The court's decision has sparked protests among local residents, who claim the ruling



was based on incorrect information.

Antony Fernandes, a local resident, criticised the verdict, stating: "The court has made the wrong decision as the survey number was not checked properly. False allegations have been made against the people of Agonda. Our houses are being sealed, even though we have been staying here since 1966. The Chief Minister should take necessary action on this matter as soon as

possible."

He further argued that businesses in the area had obtained the necessary licences and had paid the required fees before commencing operations.

The High Court's directive, issued on Wednesday, called for the immediate closure of 67 commercial establishments located near the designated turtle nesting site, in the CRZ-III area in violation of rules at Agonda Beach.

The order was passed during

the hearing of a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) writ petition filed by Aman Gupta. The court's intervention came after Advocate General Devidas Pangam informed the bench that the Goa Coastal Zone Management Authority (GCZMA) had failed to comply with a previous court order regarding the matter.

Parties were given an opportunity to produce documents but did not furnish anything, he told the court, alleging misconduct on part of the GCZMA in acting against these structures.

He said it was a sensitive matter as it concerns olive ridley turtles and added that these structures pose an imminent danger to their nesting sites.

Authorities have now moved swiftly to enforce the ruling, but with strong opposition from local residents and the issue remains contentious.

23 beach shacks to close over sub-letting charge

PANJIM: The Goa Tourism Department has ordered closure of 23 beach shacks on charges that the owners had sub-let their premises to people from outside the State.

The directive, issued by Tourism Director Kedar Naik, mandates immediate cessation of activities at these establishments. "The shack allottee is debarred and shall stop conducting any activity immediately under the Goa State Shack Policy 2023-2026. The security deposit submitted by the allottee is forfeited to the government treasury, and the allottee shall remove the beach shack within 15 days from the date of the order," the official order stated.

The department noted that the

affected allottees had clearly violated provisions related to the erection of temporary seasonal structures, beach shacks, deck beds, and umbrellas for the 2023-26 tourist season.

The Tourism Director further added that the explanations provided by the allottees were untenable and lacked concrete proof to justify their actions.

Last month, the Goa Tourism Department had issued show-cause notices to 99 beach shack operators for allegedly breaching the State's shack policy.

During a surprise inspection across the State, authorities found that 99 beach shacks—including 80 in North Goa—had violated the Goa State Shack Policy.

Cops net another accused in hydroponic weed case

Kerala native Srijit facilitated the drug trade, regularly bought flight tickets for his aides to carry on nefarious activities

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Goa Police Crime Branch has arrested a partner in crime in the 12 kg of hydroponic marijuana case reported at Guirim.

The police said that Srijit, a native of Kerala was arrested at his residence and brought down to Goa on a transit warrant. "Srijit was part of the international drug racket that operated from Thailand and Bengaluru and sold the contraband in Goa, Bengaluru and Mumbai. He used to even arrange for flight tickets for his aides who would travel between Bengaluru and Thailand regularly," said a police officer.

Police stated that they are on the lookout for two other main kingpins of the drug trade who have been operating from Thailand. However, both are natives of Kerala and police have sought passport details from their counterparts in Kerala to nab them.

Meanwhile the accused has been remanded in five days police custody.

It may be recalled that the Crime Branch seized 12 kg of hydroponic marijuana worth Rs 11.67 crore in an international market crackdown. A 32-year-old Bengaluru resident, Gautam, has been arrested in connection with the case.

This is the largest seizure of hydroponic marijuana in recent history, surpassing the Anti-Narcotics Cell's previous 2-kg haul. The Crime

ANC RAIDS COASTAL AREAS FOR DRUGS, SNIFFER DOG PRESSED INTO SERVICE



PANJIM: The Anti-Narcotics Cell (ANC) of the Goa Police has intensified its efforts to combat the growing drug menace in the State through surprise checks and raids. As part of these efforts, the police have been conducting surprise inspections along the coastal belt, as well as at key transportation hubs such as interstate bus stands and railway stations. The goal of these checks is to target drug peddlers who use these routes to

"These surprise checks, which are carried out randomly, are an important component of the ANC's ongoing mission to curb the drug issue in the state," SP ANC Tikam Singh Verma emphasised. Goa's coastal areas and transportation hubs have become major points of concern, as narcotics are frequently trafficked through trains and buses. These checks aim to intercept drugs before they can reach the streets and make their way into the hands of users.

Branch has charged Gautam under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

Hydroponic Marijuana, which is a

high-purity, chemical-free cannabis and popular in Goa's elite party, circuit is sold in the international market for Rs 50 lakh per kg.

CCP passes Rs 120 crore budget for 2025-26

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Corporation of the City of Panaji (CCP) on Thursday passed a budget of Rs 120 crore for the financial year 2025-26, with a projected expenditure of Rs 118 crore.

A major allocation of Rs 20 crore has been set aside for development projects aimed at improving Panaji's infrastructure and civic amenities.

Speaking to reporters, Corporation of the City of Panaji Mayor Rohit Monserrate detailed the corporation's financial plans, stating "This year, our spending outlay is going to be Rs 15-20 crore. We have planned refurbishing all our infrastructure projects, including Caranzalem Children's Park, Caranzalem Fish Market, and St Inez Cemetery."

He asserted that the CCP's financial position remains strong. "CCP is in a very good financial condition. We have not touched fixed deposits. Our recovery has been the highest," he added.

However, former Mayor Surendra Furtado criticised the budget, claiming the figures were impractical and lacked proper justification.

"This year, the budget figure has jumped drastically, and the CCP has no answers. I can bring it before the corporation's meeting and say that the budget figures are not realistic. Last year, it was around Rs 98 crore, while they collected only Rs 68 crore. It is very easy to make announcements, but there has to be collection," Furtado alleged.

He also pointed out that a substantial Rs 80 crore remains outstanding as unpaid house tax. "Today's budget is just copy, cut, and paste," he remarked.

Despite the criticism, the Corporation of the City of Panaji remains optimistic about its financial planning and the execution of

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Taleigao youth crushed under crane

Team Herald

PANJIM: A tragic accident at a flyover construction site in Porvorim claimed the life of a two-wheeler rider from Nagali, Taleigao, on Thursday.

The deceased, identified as Vishal Kankonkar, was reportedly riding his vehicle when he came under a crane carrying a concrete deck for the bridge. Further details on the incident are awaited.

Gold jewellery worth Rs 3 lakh stolen from Panjim hotel

Team Herald

PANJIM: A Karnataka native, identified as Viranna Gauda, has been booked by Panjim police for allegedly stealing a gold chain and two rings worth Rs 3 lakh from a hotel room in the capital city.

According to the police, the complaint was filed by Manjunath Koradur, also a Karnataka resident. An FIR has been registered, and efforts are underway to trace the accused.

Goa introduces e-stamping for secure, transparent transactions

CM announces smart prepaid meters and long-term development vision

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Goa government on Thursday launched e-stamping, a digital initiative for the secure electronic stamping of documents and payment of stamp duty above Rs 9,999.

A private company has been appointed as the Central Record Agency for the initiative, which was inaugurated by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant at Mantralaya in the presence of Revenue Minister Atanasio Monserrate.

Speaking to reporters, Chief Minister Sawant described e-stamping as a "significant step towards modernising governance and public service delivery in the state." He called it a "historic milestone towards a digitally empowered, efficient, and transparent system in the stamp duty process."

The Chief Minister highlighted several advantages of the new

“This integration of advanced technology will enhance coordination and reduce the risk to life and property. Goa is moving towards a tech-enabled disaster management system, ensuring better safety for its citizens

– Pramod Sawant, Chief Minister

system including: 24x7 availability of stamp duty payments, seamless and paperless transactions, immediate verification and digital record maintenance, elimination of fraudulent practices and accurate stamp duty calculation to prevent revenue loss.

He further assured that all existing stamp paper vendors would be incorporated into the system.

"This integration of advanced technology will enhance coordination and reduce the risk to life and property. Goa is moving towards a tech-enabled disaster management system, ensuring better safety for its citizens," he said.

Sawant also announced

the launch of the Vikasit Goa 2047 project, which aims to shape the state's long-term development vision.

The government plans to invite public suggestions to incorporate into the final vision document.

The Chief Minister further stated that the State Cabinet has approved the introduction of smart prepaid metering by the Electricity Department under the DBFOOT (Design, Build, Finance, Own, Operate, and Transfer) model.

With these multiple initiatives, the Goa government is aiming to digitise governance, strengthen disaster preparedness, and enhance efficiency in service delivery.

CM orders probe in Margao rape case

Team Herald

PANJIM: Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Thursday announced that he has ordered a thorough investigation into the alleged rape case in Margao, despite the victim later denying any assault.

Speaking to reporters at Mantralaya in Porvorim, Sawant stated, "I have instructed the authorities to uncover the reality of the situation and to investigate potential suspects of human trafficking. I have also requested a report on the matter."

He reiterated the need for a detailed inquiry, regardless of the victim's latest statement. "The victim says that rape has not occurred. But in spite of that, I have instructed a thorough investigation. I have instructed officials to find out what the reality is, even if the victim changes her statement," he said.

The case revolves around a 25-year-old woman from Karnataka who had initially alleged that she was sexually assaulted by three men. However, she later retracted her statement, admitting that she had fabricated the claim because she wanted to return to her native place.

Despite the retraction, the Chief Minister has stressed the importance of investigating all aspects of the case, particularly any potential links to human trafficking.

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