

BUDGET WOOS INDUSTRY WITH SOPS AND SUPPORT

Team Herald

PORVORIM: Stressing on development of infrastructure to boost tourism in the State, Chief Minister **Pramod Sawant** on Wednesday presented a revenue surplus budget for the financial year 2025-26, providing incentives for tourism entrepreneurs setting up starred hotels in rural Goa, incentives for the food processing industry, stress on upskilling and emphasis on education.

MORE ON PAGE 2

The big focus was on entities ready to invest over Rs 5,000 crore in the State, with the CM promising incentives such as full SGST reimbursement for five years, 50 per cent waiver on stamp duty and registrations, subsidy on supply of various amenities for five years and other benefits.

Cont on Pg 12 >>

BIG DISCOUNT SHOPPING FESTIVAL
Opp. HEALTH OFFICE CHINCHINIM
26th Mar To 6th Apr
TIME : 10.30 am To 9.30 pm



“To promote the tourism infrastructure in the hotel and medical tourism sector, I propose to provide a tax holiday in the form of 50% rebate on State GST, exemption of stamp duty and registration, waiver of other processing charges to investors who set up hotels or hospitals that are at least three-star or above in the hinterland talukas of Bicholim, Sanguem, Canacona, Quepem, Dharbandora, Ponda and Sattari
— **Pramod Sawant, Chief Minister**

GOA BUDGET 2025-26 AT A GLANCE

Budget allocation Rs 28,163 crore	Capital expenditure Rs 7,863 crore
Revenue expenditure Rs 20,299 crore	Revenue surplus Rs 2,403 crore
Fiscal deficit Rs 2,826 crore, which is around 2.5% of GDP	GSDP: Rs 1,38,624.86 crore with growth of 14.27%
TAXATION ■ No new taxes or VAT hikes ■ One-time amnesty scheme to settle tax cases ■ Real estate sector can pay infrastructure tax in two installments	INDUSTRY SOPS Full SGST reimbursement for five years, 50% stamp duty waiver for investments over Rs 5,000 crore Interest rebate on working capital for cashew processing industries
TOURISM ■ Rs 440 crore for projects in aero-tourism, marine tourism (underwater tunnel, oceanarium), and a Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Digital Museum ■ 50% SGST rebate, exemption from stamp duty for tourism projects in hinterland	DEVELOPMENT Rs 100 crore capital works to be sanctioned for each constituency
MINING AND NATURAL RESOURCES ■ Nine more mining leases to be auctioned, alongside auction of iron ore dumps ■ 12 zones identified for sand extraction in Zuari and Mandovi rivers	

Old Goa project: No NOC given, says Church

Archdiocese of Goa & Daman clarifies position on PRASAD scheme, says objections on Heritage Interpretation Centre and parking lot not addressed

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Archdiocese of Goa and Daman has categorically stated that it has not issued a No Objection Certificate (NOC) for the implementation and execution of the proposed PRASAD scheme at Old Goa. The project has been in the eye of a storm this week, with protestors alleging that unsupervised excavation and construction work was being carried out at the site where historical artefacts like cannon balls have been discovered. The Se Old Goa Village Panchayat also stated that it was 'clueless' about the project. Now the Church's statement has put the government project on a stickier wicket than ever before.

The Church clarification came in response to reports suggesting that the Basilica and the Archdiocese were taken into confidence while finalising plans for a facilitation centre for tourists under the PRASAD scheme. Fr Noel D'Costa, the Financial Administrator of the Archdiocese, stated that he had represented the Church in meetings regarding the PRASAD scheme. He explained that once the proposals were

CONCERNS OF THE CHURCH

■ According to Fr Noel D'Costa, the Financial Administrator of the Archdiocese, the Church had serious objections regarding the location, scale, style and relevance of the proposed Heritage Interpretation Centre, as well as the planned parking lot
■ The Archdiocese particularly flagged concerns over the Arsenal site, where the parking facility was planned. It was suggested that the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) should conduct a survey to identify and demarcate potential

ruins and remains
■ The Church also recommended that any parking facility be designed with removable and permeable materials to safeguard underlying archaeology and facilitate groundwater absorption
■ Despite GTDC scaling down the Heritage Interpretation Centre from a ground-plus-two structure to a lower-ground-plus-ground-floor design, Fr D'Costa stated that during a meeting on June 29, 2022, he had explicitly conveyed the Church's serious reservations

initially presented, they were thoroughly examined by senior architects, engineers and heritage experts associated with the Church. Their evaluations focused on ensuring that any interventions would not compromise the sanctity of the spaces. Based on these assessments, certain elements – such as barricades to regulate entry, Segways and e-auros for movement, water ATMs, CCTV cameras, external lighting, baggage

scanners, metal detectors, self-propelled sweeping machines, dust bins, landscaping, seating arrangements, and informational signage – were considered acceptable. However, Fr D'Costa emphasised that the Church had serious objections regarding the location, scale, style and relevance of the proposed Heritage Interpretation Centre, as well as the planned parking lot.

Cont on Pg 12 >>

Akshay Patra sparks 'mid-day' debate in House

Team Herald

PANJIM: The government's decision to rope in Akshay Patra Foundation to provide mid-day meals to students came in for heavy criticism in the Assembly on Wednesday, with the Opposition accusing the government of side lining self-help groups (SHGs) involved in producing the mid-day meals. Fatorda MLA Vijai Sardesai even claimed that half of the Foundation's 52 kitchens had been caught diverting food grains and mismanaging funds.

However, replying to a calling attention notice jointly tabled by opposition members over the government decision to rope in Akshaya Patra Foundation, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said that the SHGs supplying mid-day meals to schools will not be sidelined and will be protected. "No Self-Help Group (SHG) or Mahila Mandal will be discontinued from the

While Fatorda MLA Vijai Sardesai claimed that half of Akshaya Patra Foundation's 52 kitchens had been caught diverting food grains and mismanaging funds, CM Pramod Sawant said Self-Help Groups (SHG) or Mahila Mandals would not be discontinued from the supply of mid-day meals to schools

supply of mid-day meals to the existing school children as allotted earlier by the Directorate of Education. However, it is made clear that if the supply is not as per the standards or the Central government guidelines for National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE), 2006 issued by Ministry of Education, Department of Elementary Education & Literacy, Government of India, their contract will be terminated,"

the CM said.

Sawant further informed the House that the government is yet to finalise the list of schools or number of students for the supply of mid-day meal from The Akshaya Patra Foundation, Bangalore.

In all, five – Ghanshyam Seva Samiti, Delhi; Kendriya Bhandar, Mumbai; National Federation of Farmers, Procurement, Processing & Retailing Co-operatives of India Ltd (NA-COF) New Delhi; Sri Shakti, Mumbai and The Akshaya Patra Foundation, Bangalore – submitted their bids. After thorough verification by the bid opening committee, the Akshaya Patra Foundation, Bangalore was short-listed.

Fatorda MLA said that the Akshaya Patra Foundation attempts to impose a particular diet on students. He suggested that Human Resource Department could bring together all the SHGs in the State and bid for the Central scheme.

Insensitive, inhuman: SC stays Allahabad HC's rape ruling

PTI, NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday stayed the Allahabad High Court's recent observations on grabbing of a woman's breasts and pulling of her 'pyjama' not amounting to an attempt to rape and said it reflected total 'insensitivity' and 'inhuman approach'.

Taking a strong exception to the high court's observations made in its March 17 verdict, the apex court termed it a 'very serious matter'. "In normal circumstances, we are slow in granting stay at this stage. But since the observations appearing in paragraphs 21, 24 and 26 are totally unknown to the cannons of law and depict total insensitive and inhuman approach, we are inclined to stay the said observations," a bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih said.

Cont on Pg 12 >>

School teacher leads by example, turns family bar into library

SANTOSH NAIK

PONDA: For Uday Chepo Gaonkar, the need to ignite and inspire young minds has proven to be far more important than family legacy. The dedicated educator from Okamb-Dharbandora has transformed his family's ancestral bar into a library, a decision that was feted by villagers and public figures from the area, who had gathered on Wednesday in the inauguration of the library.

As the library, which also serves as a Lokseva Centre, was thrown open, Sarpanch



Guests at the inauguration of the library

Balaji Gawas lauded Gaonkar's decision to shut down his bar and open a space that will serve as a 'temple of knowledge' for the community. Gaonkar, who has been in the teaching profession for 35 years, holding roles such as Headmaster, Principal, and Deputy Director of Education, explained that his decision to close the bar was a

reflection of his responsibility as a teacher.

"As a teacher, I have always encouraged my students and the community to lead an addiction-free life. The presence of liquor shops in the area was damaging families and the future of our children," he said.

Cont on Pg 12 >>

“As a teacher, I have always encouraged my students and the community to lead an addiction-free life. The presence of liquor shops in the area was damaging families and the future of our children. I could not, in good conscience, continue selling liquor. It was then that I decided to transform my family's bar into a library, a place where wisdom can be shared
— **Uday Chepo Gaonkar, teacher**

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