

Priol's political scene heats up with Sawant's veiled ultimatum to MGP

SANTOSH NAIK

PONDA: On the occasion of Gudi Padwa, considered an auspicious day for launching new ventures, political parties also made significant announcements, signalling the beginning of election debates. With the 2027 Assembly elections still a year-and-a-half-away, discussions have already gained momentum in Ponda. However, it was Chief Minister Pramod Sawant's recent statement that caught political analysts off guard, adding further heat to the already intense summer. Addressing a BJP Karayakarta Melava in Priol on Sunday, Sawant, without directly naming MGP, issued a stern warning to the party. He stated that if the alliance partner did not agree to BJP's terms for Priol, they should consider breaking away immediately. "If alliance terms with the BJP for Priol is not agreed to, then today itself, they should break away. Priol will remain with BJP. No compromise of whatsoever nature for Priol. If anyone has issues, then they should break away. I do not fear anyone. Our double-engine government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, supports Goa's development and provides funds for various projects" - Pramod Sawant, Chief Minister

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If anyone has issues then they should break away. I do not fear anyone. Our double-engine government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, supports Goa's development and provides funds for various projects," Sawant declared. Art and Culture Minister Govind Gaude welcomed the Chief Minister's statement, saying it gave him the strength of "ten elephants." Reacting to the remarks, MGP Supremo Sudin Dhavalikar said that the BJP-MGP alliance was a decision taken at the highest level by PM Narendra Modi's inner circle. "I have no idea what exactly has happened, but I will believe any change in alliance only if PM Modi, Amit Shah, or Fadnavis personally inform me of their decision. The Chief Minister may have made this statement just to motivate BJP workers," Dhavalikar said. MGP youth leader Dr.

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Ketan Bhatkar responded indifferently, stating that he was neither happy nor sad about the BJP's stance. He recalled that in 1999, BJP had broken its alliance with MGP, which ultimately helped Dhavalikar win. He hinted that similar political developments could unfold if the alliance falls apart. Interestingly, Health Minister Vishwajit Rane had recently praised Dhavalikar during a health camp in Marcaim, referring to him as a long-time friend and an elder brother, while expressing confidence that the BJP-MGP alliance would remain intact.

Adding to the political intrigue, MGP President Deepak Dhavalikar had previously announced his intention to contest from Priol in the upcoming elections. Meanwhile, in Ponda, political activity is also heating up, with leaders engaging in debates over key issues such as the ongoing water crisis. Many have started sponsoring sports tournaments and health camps, with an eye on the 2027 Assembly elections.

Varca villagers oppose Velsao to Cavellissim road expansion, jetties in Sal

Team Herald

MARGAO: At the Varca gram sabha that was chaired by Sarpanch Flavio Barreto, the villagers engaged in extensive discussions on multiple pressing issues, with two resolutions passed opposing the contentious road expansion from Velsao to Cavellissim and the proposed construction of three new jetties in River Sal. It is to be noted that several other coastal panchayats have also opposed these two proposed infrastructure projects. Earlier, the gram sabha approved its budget, which included increased provisions to tackle the stray animal menace. A contract is set to be signed with Goa Animal Welfare Trust (GWAT) for the sterilisation of stray dogs, a move aimed at controlling their population more effectively. The recent High Court's order on illegal constructions also took center stage, prompting the panchayat body to consider organising a special session with a legal expert to guide villagers on the matter.

Loud music, stray cattle, destruction of sand dunes dominate Anjuna gram sabha

Villagers object to CRZ violations, call to protect turtle nesting sites along the coast

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Anjuna gram sabha that was held on Sunday initially witnessed chaotic scenes over the passage of the annual budget but later the Sarpanch accepted the suggestions of the locals and assured to do the needful. Major issues discussed were destruction of sand dunes on the beach, stray cattle.

The gram sabha witnessed chaotic scenes as the budget of Rs 14.6 crore was sought to be passed in a huff. The villagers objected to this and said that the budget cannot be pushed through and needs proper study and observation and whatever needs to be changed should then be incorporated, such a budget cannot be passed in a huff and hurry style. Ramesh Naik, a local sought to know what was the hurry and why no proper public awareness was made with regards to the budget. He was supported by other villagers also. Sarpanch Chimulkar accepted the suggestions of the locals and said that whatever



A gram sabha members questioning the sarpanch over illegalities in the CRZ at Anjuna

has discussed is being noted and necessary steps will be taken. Sagar Bhosle raised the issue of stray cattle and wondered what was preventing the panchayat to act since last so many months. Sarpanch Chimulkar informed that discussions are on with some gaushalas and finally there are higher authorities who also need to approve this action of the panchayat and therefore panchayat actions need to be in accordance with that. Another gram sabha member Jeremy raised the issue of loud music in clubs as usual and sought prompt action in the matter. Sarpanch as usual said that the panchayat cannot do much

and the police needs to be informed and enforce the law. Another issue which was hotly discussed was the destruction of sand dunes and the construction of a road in survey number 354/1 at Vagator and Biodiversity members Ramesh Naik and Satyawan Harmalkar questioned as to how these illegalities were permitted at the cost of nature. Other villagers also joined the discussion and pointed out that this was in CRZ violation and now Vagator is a turtle nesting site and should be protected. Chimulkar said that he would issue notices to the party concerned and arrange for a joint inspection to check for illegalities.

AUSPICIOUS BEGINNING



A little boy from Quitla Aldona placing a Gudi on the occasion of Gudi Padwa, the beginning of the New Year according to Hindu calendar

Carmona opposes bid to fence area under NDZ

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Carmona village panchayat gram sabha has unanimously opposed a proposal to carry out fencing in a Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) area on land that is privately owned by the family of a politician.

The extraordinary meeting, held on Sunday for the purpose of discussing a single proposal related to the land in question, saw strong resistance from the villagers amid concerns over potential violations of environmental norms. The controversial proposal sought permission to construct a temporary fishing shed and install fencing in areas that fall under the Coastal Regulation Zone (CZ) regulations. These areas have two survey numbers. As per the notice that was published by the panchayat prior to the gram sabha, one of the two areas is zoned as paddy fields and partly as river/nalla/pond, while the other area is zoned as mangrove forest and river/nallah/pond.

Villagers raised 13 specific objections during the heated discussion, demanding full clarification from the Goa Coastal Zone Management Authority (GCZMA) before any permissions could be considered. The villagers also pointed out that the CRZ 2011 notification has to be read together with the Regional Plan 2021 while making decisions on the matter. The locals also questioned why the GCZMA had not conducted site inspections when the panchayat had called for the same. The villagers also challenged the need for fencing when traditional fishing activities elsewhere in the village operate without such barriers. They emphasised that no development should be permitted in khazan lands as per existing regulations and that the area falls under a No Development Zone (NDZ). Speaking to the media af-

"The panchayat had already written to the proprietor seeking responses to certain discrepancies they had found"
- Sandra Fernandes, Sarpanch

ter the meeting, Sarpanch Sandra Fernandes said the meeting was called as these proposed works were on a notified bundh and thus it was a public issue. "The panchayat had already written to the proprietor seeking responses to certain discrepancies they had found," said the sarpanch. On the gram sabha demands, the Sarpanch said the panchayat would discuss the matter at its panchayat body meeting and then write to the GCZMA about the CRZ-related clarifications.

It is to be noted that when the Minister was recently asked about this issue by media persons at the weekly public grievance meetings held at the South District Collectorate, he had strongly denied all allegations of there being any wrongdoings regarding his property.

Shiroda celebrates palanquin-borne Goddess with Gulalotsav

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Shiroda Gulalotsav of Shree Kamakshi Devi, a vibrant part of the Shigmo festivities, was celebrated on Sunday in Shiroda with great pomp and gaiety, featuring the enthusiastic exchange of colorful gulal.

The famous Gulal Utsav of Shree Kamakshi Devi at Shiroda has been celebrated by Shree Kamakshi Saunasthan Shiroda for several years and remains a popular event, drawing a large number of devotees from across Goa, Karnataka, and beyond. The festival began in the evening after the completion of religious ceremonies at the temple. Devotees first offered gulal to Shree Kamakshi Devi before joyfully ex-



changing gulal with one another, chanting "Jai Kamakshi!" A large number of devotees gathered in Shiroda on Sunday afternoon to participate in the religious rituals, seeking the blessings of Shree Kamakshi. Later, they actively took part in the gulal celebrations, transcending barriers of caste and creed. Earlier, after the completion of the rituals, a palki (palanquin) carrying Shree Kamakshi Devi

Comunidades urge caution as govt moves to appoint custodians

Team Herald

MARGAO: Comunidades in South Goa have voiced concerns over the state government's move to appoint Mamlatdars or Joint Mamlatdars as custodians of comunidades where elections have not taken place. The apprehensions stem from the recently amended Article 181-A of the Code of Comunidades, which enables the government to step in under such circumstances. While the process to implement this amendment has been set in motion by South Goa's Administrator of Comunidades, Ganesh Barve, comunidade leaders are calling for a cautious approach to prevent excessive government control. Savio Correia, President of the Margao Comunidade, underscored the need to first explore the appointment of suitable components from within the comunidade before resorting to state intervention. "While the amendment allows the government to

"While the amendment allows the government to take over the custody of comunidades that have not held elections, this should only be a last resort. Efforts must be made to identify competent individuals willing to serve on the managing committees, as was previously done"
- Savio Correia, President, Margao Comunidade

take over the custody of comunidades that have not held elections, this should only be a last resort. Efforts must be made to identify competent individuals willing to serve on the managing committees, as was previously done," said Correia. Following the amendment's introduction, the Administrator of Comunidades has issued a directive to Escrivaos, instructing them to compile a list of comunidade bodies that failed to elect their managing committees within the time frame mandated by Article 47 of the Code. Addressing media inquiries, Administrator Barve clarified that the ongoing process is meant to facilitate the amendment's implementation.

He explained that as per Article 181-A, he is required to gather detailed reports from the Escrivaos regarding comunidades where elections did not occur. Once these reports are compiled, they will be forwarded to the government for further action. "Whoever, he emphasized that the Administrator's role in this matter ends with the submission of the reports, adding that the final decision on how to proceed with these defaulting comunidade bodies lies with the government. Currently, nearly one-third of the 90 comunidade bodies in South Goa have defaulted in holding elections. Of these, 20 are in Salcete, six in Mormugao, three in Quepem, and one

IMD predicts rainfall till Apr 3

Team Herald

PANJIM: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Goa on Sunday issued a yellow alert for the state till April 3, forecasting thunderstorm accompanied with winds gusting to 30-40 kmph at isolated places across Goa.

Counterfeit Apple products seized in Mapusa

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Goa Crime Branch, along with Apple Inc. officials, seized counterfeit Apple products worth approximately Rs 1 crore from three shops in Mapusa Municipal Market on March 27. The raid, led to the seizure of fake mobile accessories such as batteries, chargers, earphones, and data cables. The accused Arjun Kumar, Karmi Bharti, and Dashrath Puri, all hailing from Rajasthan, were caught selling the counterfeit items.

JIH wishes all Goans Eid-ul-Fitr Mubarak

PANJIM: Jamaat-e-Islami Hind has wished all the Goans an Eid-ul-Fitr Mubarak.

In a message, Asif Husain, State President of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, wished all Goan brothers and sisters an Eid-ul-Fitr Mubarak and prayed that the message of the holy month of Ramadhan guide us to build an inclusive society working for the welfare of mankind irrespective of caste, creed and region.

Archbishop extends Eid-ul-Fitr greetings

Team Herald

PANJIM: Archbishop Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrao has extended his greetings on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

In his message, the Archbishop said, "As they end their month-long fast, our Muslim brothers and sisters are beginning today a new life of peace and of restoration of ties with family and community. In the name of the Christian community

in Goa and in my own name, I share in their joy."

He said, "May this feast be an occasion for fraternal encounters between all humans, in which we can celebrate together God's goodness. Echoing the Vatican Message for Eid-ul-Fitr, "such simple but profound moments of sharing are seeds of hope that can transform our communities and our world". Wishing all our Muslim brethren a happy Eid!"

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