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CENTRE TABLES WAQF BILL IN RAJYA SABHA

He also said Waqf owns the largest chunk of properties in the country, leaving aside those owned by Defence and Railways.

"It has been said here that Muslims will be harmed by the step we are taking. Many people said this is unconstitutional, illegal and the right of Muslims is being snatched away... Very categorically, I want to reject all these allegations," Rijiju said. Speaking on "Waqf by User", the Minority Affairs Minister said properties already registered with proper documentation will not be dealt with retrospectively.

"In Waqf By User, the properties already registered and cases that have already been settled, we won't go prospectively and deal with that. It would be with a prospective effect.

"However, if there is any disputed land or any matter that is sub judice, then we cannot do away with the right of the courts. So all the Waqf properties which are registered with proper documentation, they will remain so," Rijiju said. He stressed that the entire exercise was aimed at bringing in the three pillars of transparency, accountability and efficiency.

"We are not here to damage anybody's religious affiliation," Rijiju said.

Citing a previous court judgment, the minister said it makes it clear that Waqf is a statutory body and not a representative body of Muslims.

"In the amendment, we have made it clear that any person practising Islam for more than five years can dedicate properties to Waqf. There is no iota of doubt in who can create Waqf," he said.

"The new provisions that we have brought in, is that all the recognised sects of Muslims will constitute the Waqf Board -- there will be Shias, there will be Sunnis and other backward classes will also be there in the Waqf Board as members so that the interests of all would be taken into account and I don't think there should be any opposition to that. We are making it so inclusive," Rijiju informed. He further said out of 22 members in the Central Waqf Council, not more than four will be non-Muslims including ex-officio members, besides three members of Parliament who can be of any religion. The Council must include two women members, he added.

The question of the majority being non-Muslims does not arise, he reiterated.

"If we develop a Waqf property properly in the next few years, Muslims will prosper," said the minister, appealing to the members in the Upper House to engage in a productive discussion and extend support to the bill. Rijiju said 31,999 cases are pending in the Waqf Tribunal and more than 14,000 litigants are Muslims, adding that the right to appeal has also been added.

"We have not done this for any personal gain," said the minister, as he emphasised that the intent behind the proposed legislation was to put an end to the malpractices of people grabbing other people's property.

"We should not say anything which creates a furore or gives rise to a conflict," Rijiju said, urging members to share perspectives on the bill in a manner that enhances the quality of the debate.

He expressed the hope that all members would extend support to the proposed legislation.

RETIREMENT FUND BODY EASES CLAIM PROCESS

These measures will significantly streamline the process of claim settlement and reduce grievances related to claim rejections, it stated.

These requirements were initially relaxed on a pilot basis for certain KYC-updated members. Since the pilot launch on May 28, 2024, the move has already benefited 1.7 crore EPF members. Following the successful pilot, EPFO has now extended this relaxation to all members, the ministry said. Since the bank account is already verified along with the EPF members' details at the time of seeding of bank accounts with the UAN, this additional documentation is no longer necessary, it said, adding, this will eliminate the possibility of claim rejections due to poor-quality/unreadable uploads and reduce associated grievances.

During the financial year 2024-25, 1.3 crore members submitted requests for seeding their bank accounts and the requests after due matching with the respective bank/NPCI are to be approved by the employer through DSC/E-Sign. It is seen that around 36,000 requests for seeding of bank accounts are being raised by the members on a daily basis and the banks take an average of 3 days to complete the verification.

However, after the bank account verification, the average time taken by the employer to approve the process is about 13 days resulting in piling up of workload at the level of the employer and consequent delay in the seeding of bank account for the member.

power shutdown

PONDA: On April 4, from 9 am to 2 pm. Affected areas are near DK arcade Sadar Ponda, Ponda Commerce centre and surrounding areas.

PONDA: On April 4, from 9 am to 2 pm. Affected areas are Cotwada near Progress high school, Antruz nagar and surrounding areas.

PONDA: On April 5, from 9 am to 2 pm. Affected areas are Panditwada and surrounding areas.

ASSOLNA: On April 4, from 9.30 am to 12 pm. Areas under village panchayat Assolna will be affected.

MARGAO: On April 4, from 9 am to 6 pm. Affected areas are Rayan Villa, Balaji Crockaray, opposite Ashirwad hospital, inside Vikrant building, Jain Aluminium shop, opposite Green View hotel and surrounding areas.

CURTORIM: On April 4, from 8 am to 3 pm. Affected areas are Tembim and Monzon Aframent.

BICHOLIM: On April 4, at 11 KV Advalpal Feeder and Moitem II DTC, Bicholim for work of 11KV UG cable from 9 am to 2 pm. Affected areas are Advalpal Village, Moitem village, near Assnora plant and surrounding areas.

CURTORIM: On April 5, from 8 am to 3 pm. Pandicoll will be affected areas.

MARGAO: On April 5, from 9 am to 6 pm. Affected areas are opposite Sanrit hotel, Kismat restaurant, opposite Railway station road, near Jama Masjid, hotel Nandini, near Bata showroom and surrounding areas.

PMC to relocate Ponda fish market amid safety concerns

Vendors demand basic amenities before shifting to new place

Team Herald

PONDA: The Ponda Municipal Council (PMC) has decided to shift the fish market to a new location as a precautionary measure after portions of the old market roofing began to collapse. The decades-old structure has been deemed unsafe, prompting the authorities to take immediate action to ensure safety of vendors and customers.

The affected fish vendors have urged the PMC to take them into confidence and provide adequate facilities before the relocation. This demand comes in response to the Council's decision to demolish the existing fish market building here due to its deteriorating condition and construct a new one in its place.

The PMC has decided to shift the fish vendors to the basement parking area of the market complex as a temporary arrangement. However, concerned vendors gathered at the Council office, expressing their fears



Fish vendors raise their grievances before the Ponda Municipal Council Chairperson Anand Naik on Thursday

and demanding assurances regarding basic necessities such as water and electricity connections at the new location.

The Fish Vendors' Association acknowledged that the current market structure is on the verge of collapse but insisted that their concerns be addressed before the move. A group of vendors met with PMC Chairperson Anand Naik to voice their

grievances, stating they were willing to relocate provided that proper facilities and additional space were allocated to them for conducting business. At present, there are approximately 113 fish vendors operating in the market.

PMC Chairperson Anand Naik confirmed that the existing market, built in 1982, is now in a dangerous state and requires urgent reconstruction.

He assured vendors that the council would hold a meeting with them and PMC officials on 4 April at the PMC hall to discuss their concerns and find a viable solution.

"The condition of the market is hazardous, and the council has taken the decision to construct a new fish market. Therefore, vendors will need to be relocated. Similarly, those operating on the



SANTOSH NAIK

“The condition of the market is hazardous, and the council has taken the decision to construct a new fish market. Therefore, vendors will need to be relocated. Similarly, those operating on the first floor of the building will also have to be moved due to safety concerns.”

— Anand Naik, PMC Chairperson

first floor of the building will also have to be moved due to safety concerns,” Naik stated.

With the impending dem-

olition, the vendors now await the scheduled meeting, hoping for a resolution that ensures their livelihood is not disrupted.

MOUNTING MESS



The authorities concerned are yet to clear the garbage piled up at Canca-Parra routed corner leading to Guirim highway which is a potential health hazard

2-wheeler rider killed in Cortalim accident

Team Herald

VASCO: A motorcyclist lost his life, and another rider sustained injuries in a collision between two bikes near Birla Cross Junction, Cortalim, on Tuesday night.

According to the Verna police, the accident occurred when Simon Leema, a native of Honnavar, Uttar Karnataka, was riding rashly and negligently. Upon reaching the traffic signal, he crossed the highway towards Pirni without proper caution, leading to a collision with another two-wheeler and a secondary impact with a car.

In the crash, Avinash Ponj, a resident of Vallant, Bardez, sustained grievous injuries, while Simon Leema was also critically injured. The car driver, Marc Joaquim Fernandes, escaped unhurt.

Leema later succumbed to his injuries. The Verna police conducted a panchanama and sent the body for a post-mortem examination, which confirmed the cause of death as "damage to the chest, abdomen, and cervical spine consequent to blunt force impact, resulting in vital organ damage."

Following the post-mortem, police handed over the body to the deceased's relatives for last rites.

Elusive leopard trapped at Harmal; to be relocated

Team Herald

PANJIM: The leopard which was moving around the Harmal Nanoskar Wada for many days was finally trapped by the Forest Department in the early hours of Thursday.

The leopard, whose presence had created a panic in the village after it killed a pet dog was caught at around 3 am and is currently under the care of wildlife officials.

According to Forest Department officials, the big cat is approximately one-year-old and will undergo a medical examination before being released. Once the necessary clearance is obtained from the Chief Wildlife Warden, the animal will be relocated to a sanctuary.

This marks the second leopard rescue in the state this year. In Jan-

uary, a 14-month-old female leopard was successfully rescued by the Forest Department's wildlife rescue team after it strayed into a residential area in Borim. Officials had then stated that the big cat had ventured into human habitation in search of food.

The Forest Department continues to monitor leopard activity in the region to ensure both wildlife conservation and human safety.

Leopards and bison often end up into residential areas in Pernem taluka as their habitat has been dwindling. "Of late, hills and forests in the taluka are being deliberately torched by miscreants and land is sold to outsiders for a price. Run out of habitat and food, the wild animals often end up in villages," said a cashew farmer.

Trespassing, obstruction case filed at Bogda

Team Herald

VASCO: The Mormugao Police have registered an offence against multiple individuals for allegedly trespassing on government property and obstructing officials from performing their duties at the Electricity Quarters in Bogda.

The complaint was filed by Kashinath Jairam

Shetye, Executive Engineer-XV, Civil Nodal Officer, Land Acquisition Cell, Patto, Panjim.

According to Shetye, on February 28, at 8.30 am, the accused—Omkar Durbhatkar, Yash Phadte, Sudhir Tari, Yogesh Patil, and others—unlawfully entered the premises under the possession of the Electricity Department.

At the time of the incident, Shetye and his

team were engaged in construction work to close one of the four pathways within the property. The accused allegedly obstructed the work and prevented the construction of a compound wall, causing an estimated financial loss of Rs 1.50 lakh.

The case is currently under investigation by PSI Saidatta Naik of Mormugao Police Station.

Nutritional support initiative launched for TB patients

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS), Goa, launched a nutritional support programme for 200 tuberculosis (TB) patients as part of the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan on Thursday.

The event was graced by IRCS Goa chairman Gaurish Dhond along with State TB Officer Dr Manish Gaunekar, vice chairman Mangurish Pai Raiker, member Rajesh Salgaonker, general secretary John Aguiar, Rio Couto and



other esteemed guests.

During the launch, Dhond

emphasised the Prime Minister's ambitious goal of mak-

ing India TB-free, aiming to achieve this five years ahead of

the global target. He highlighted that the programme is making significant strides towards this objective.

"To attain this target, we are providing essential nutritional support to TB patients, guided by the unwavering support of the Governor of Goa," said Dhond.

This initiative underscores the commitment of the Indian Red Cross Society and the government to combat tuberculosis and improve the health and well-being of affected individuals, he added.