

Goa MLAs in the dark as BJP struggles with Cabinet reshuffle

Team Herald

PANJIM: MLAs hoping for a ministerial berth remain unsure of their induction into the Cabinet, as suspense over the much-discussed reshuffle continues. The ruling BJP is reportedly struggling to resolve internal disputes, further delaying the process. Former Chief Minister and Margao MLA Digambar Kamat, who is widely tipped to secure a ministerial position, denied any knowledge of his induction. "I am not aware of anything," he told O Herald.

Similarly, Mormugao MLA Sankalp Amonkar, who is also eyeing a cabinet

position, claimed to be in the dark. "I am unaware about it," he said. Solim MLA Delilah Lobo too stated that she wasn't aware about anything. "I have not been informed about it," said Lobo. Goa Assembly Speaker Ramesh Tawadkar, a frontrunner for a cabinet post, was unavailable for comment. However, it was Tawadkar himself who previously hinted at a cabinet reshuffle. Speaking at a programme in Sanguem last month, he remarked that the reshuffle had been under discussion for some time and assured that the impasse would be resolved within a month.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and BJP State President Damodar 'Damu' Naik have also suggested that a reshuffle is imminent. On Thursday, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant met Governor P.S. Sreedharan Pillai at Raj Bhavan, further fuelling speculation that the cabinet changes could take place in the coming days. However, when questioned about the reshuffle on Friday, the Chief Minister dodged the question. After a press briefing, he simply looked at reporters, smiled, and walked away—leaving the matter shrouded in uncertainty.

Coastal authority inspects illegal construction at Bambolim

Team Herald

PANJIM: Officials from the Goa Coastal Zone Management Authority (GCZMA), led by Expert Member Su-shant Naik, conducted an inspection of a construction project by a hotel at Bambolim.

The inspection follows a notice issued by GCZMA to the promoters on 7 March 2025 regarding alleged illegal construction on multiple survey numbers—14/1 and 2, 15/1, 16/1, 17/1, 2, and 3, 18/1, 19/1, 2, and 3, 20/1, 2, and 3, 21/1 to 8, 31/1, and 31/1. Environmental activist and convener of the Goa Green Brigade, Avertino Miranda, who was present during the inspection, raised concerns over environmental damage caused by the project. "We had complained about damage to the environment. Earlier, we were here for an inspection regarding damage to groundwater and aquifers, which was conducted by officials from the Water Resources Department," he said.



UPENDRA NAIK

Miranda alleged that the construction is proceeding without necessary approvals. "The work is being carried out without permission from the environment department and without an environmental impact assessment (EIA). We had lodged complaints with seven different departments, but so far, only one has conducted an inspection. Over a month has passed, and no action has been taken. We have no option but to take legal recourse. Any construction of 20,000 sqmt or more requires an EIA," he stated. However, Amit Garg, an

official representing the project proponent, refuted the allegations. "We are not carrying out illegal construction. We have not received any complaints from anyone, nor do we have a copy of any complaint, so we are unaware of the allegations. I do not know why this project is being termed as illegal. We have all the necessary NOCs and permissions from the respective departments," he asserted. The GCZMA inspection report and subsequent action remain awaited as concerns over environmental compliance persist.

Waqf Bill has no impact on Goa, says CM

Team Herald

PANJIM: Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Friday stated that the Waqf (Amendment) Bill would have no impact on Goa, as the State does not have a Waqf Board or any properties registered under it.

"There are no properties under the Waqf Board in Goa. This bill is not against any religion, and it is in favour of national interest," Sawant said, while extending his support for the amendment. The Chief Minister further stated that the amendment aims to introduce reforms in the management of Waqf properties across the country. He highlighted that, for the first time, a woman will be given representation on the Waqf Board and that all Waqf properties will be registered, ensuring greater transparency and accountability. The Waqf (Amendment) Bill will have no direct bearing on Goa, said Sawant.

36-yr-old Calangute man booked for abducting, raping minor

Anjuna cops yet to book resort owner who rented room to alleged rapist without checking the teenager's identification documents

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Anjuna police on Friday arrested a 36-yr-old man for allegedly abducting and raping a 16-year-old minor girl from Assagao. Police stated that the accused, Deryl Francis Fernandes, resident of Umta Vaddo Calangute, kidnapped the victim, warned her of dire consequences, took the girl to a hotel room and raped her. The police however are yet to book the owner of the hotel where the crime occurred. The incident occurred in March but the frightened girl informed her family about the assault only in April.

A police complaint was filed on April 3 and the rape was confirmed by the doctors. Police sources told O Herald that the accused took the minor victim to a hotel and told the person man-

EASY TARGET?
■ Married man befriends family at function
■ Kidnaps minor girl forcefully from Assagao
■ Takes victim to a resort in Calangute
■ 'Convinces' receptionist that girl is his daughter

ning the reception that the girl was his daughter. "We have not yet filed an FIR against the hotel owner," said the Anjuna police.

The Calangute police in whose jurisdiction the crime occurred however stated that they would book the hotelier only when the Anjuna police files a complaint against him. "Even though the crime took place in our jurisdiction, the victim was kidnapped from Assagao and the Anjuna police have booked the accused for rape yesterday. Till now, the Anjuna police have not filed a complaint against the hotel owner. Once they register an FIR,

then we will act accordingly," said a police officer from Calangute.

Another senior police officer however stated that it is duty of the police to file an FIR against the hotel owner and seek for cancellation of the resort licence since it is mandatory for the hotelier to seek identification of his guests before providing accommodation. "Rape is a heinous crime and the owner has to be booked for dereliction of duty since the crime has occurred at his resort," said the cop.

A child rights activist had this to say: "If a

place is given to a criminal where a child is sexually abused, then the owner has to be booked. It amounts to violation of the Goa Children's Act. There is a specific legislation under which the owner can be jailed for three years for letting out his premises for illegal activity," said the activist.

According to police sources, the accused Deryl Fernandes is married with a child, and met the girl and her family at a christening event where he shared his number with them. Sources in police stated that Fernandes was known to have a violent streak and was abusive towards children and had threatened to kill mother and daughter.

PSI Navneet Goltekar is investigating the case and has booked the accused under the BNS and Goa Children's Act for rape.

Flying squad formed to curb illegalities

Team Herald

PANJIM: The office of the North Goa District Collector has constituted a flying squad at the taluka level to curb illegal land filling, hill cutting, and unauthorised construction.

The Collector has directed local authorities, including Mamlatdars, Talathis, and flying squads, to identify, inspect, and remove such illegalities within their jurisdiction. Each taluka in North Goa will have a designated flying squad comprising the Mamlatdar/Joint Mamlatdar (in charge), a Police Inspector, a Police Sub-Inspector

AT YOUR SERVICE
■ Flying squad to comprise of Mamlatdar/Jt Mamlatdar, PI, PSI, Talathi, TCP representative
■ Illegal land filling, hill cutting, or unauthor-
ised construction to be reported at North Goa Collector's office, Panjim.
■ Control Room can be reached at 0832-2225383.

tor (PSI) of the concerned jurisdiction, the Talathi of the respective village, and a representative from the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Department (for cases involving illegal hill cutting or land filling). Citizens are encouraged to report any instances of illegal land filling, hill cut-

ting, or unauthorised construction to the dedicated Control Room set up at the North Goa Collector's office in Panjim. The Control Room is operational 24x7 and can be reached at 0832-2225383. Additionally, complaints can also be lodged by dialling the emergency helpline 100.

The Bombay High Court of Goa, in an order dated 6 March 2025, directed the State government to take phased action against illegal constructions, starting with roadside structures across the State.

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