

# Cross-continent custody row: High Court upholds minor's wish to stay with father

Team Herald

**PANJIM:** In a vexatious global custody battle, the High Court of Bombay at Goa has refused to grant interim relief to a mother seeking restoration of her 16-year-old son's custody and has allowed him to remain in the custody of his father after he was allegedly taken from her in Canada and brought to Goa.

However, the Court has directed the father to assist the mother in re-establishing the bond with her son for a minimum period of eight to ten days. The order was passed after the Court accepted the adolescent boy's preference to stay with his father.

The mother had filed a criminal writ petition seeking directions to the police to retrieve the boy and restore his custody to her, so that he could continue his education in Canada. She also sought the return of his passport, citing her status as the custodial parent.

The couple's marriage was solemnised on 1 Oc-

COURT ORDER

Adolescence is a time for exploring one's identity, values, and beliefs, often leading to a search for independence and autonomy. We could hear the voice of a young man, who is developing into an adult. He is at an age which is inherently infused with disturbance and psychological confusion. The phase of

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tober 2000 in Goa, as per Hindu traditions, and registered in the office of the Registrar of Marriages of the Union Territory of Chandigarh. They had two children, and the boy in question was born in July 2009.

After their marriage irretrievably broke down, the couple obtained a mutual consent divorce. As per the agreement, legal custody and guardianship of both children was granted to the mother until they reached the age of maturity, including decisions regarding education, extracurricular activities, and healthcare.

The father was granted a right, though not an obliga-

tion, to spend eight weeks (approximately 56 days) annually with the children, in any part of the world he chose.

In August 2019, the mother relocated to Canada with the children. Later, the couple finalised their divorce by mutual consent. The agreement allowed the father to have custody and guardianship of the children exclusively during the eight-week period each year.

On 22 July 2024, the father picked up the boy from Canada, with an understanding that he would return him by 30 August 2024. However, the boy did not return on the agreed

date, prompting the mother—now based in Canada—to file the present petition seeking his custody in Goa.

During the hearing, the High Court interacted with the boy, who expressed a firm desire to stay with his father. He repeatedly informed the Court that he had accompanied his father of his own volition, and did not wish to return to Canada or live with his mother.

Accepting the minor's choice, the Division Bench, comprising Justices Bharati Dangre and Nivedita P Mehta, ruled that the boy shall remain in the custody of the father.

In its order, the Court not-

ed: "Adolescence is a time for exploring one's identity, values, and beliefs, often leading to a search for independence and autonomy. We could hear the voice of a young man, who is developing into an adult. He is at an age which is inherently infused with disturbance and psychological confusion. The phase of life where he stands today is marked by significant physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural changes, coupled with the development of abstract thinking and a stronger sense of identity. Adolescents often experience heightened emotional intensity and a broader range of emotion s."

The Court further allowed the boy to complete Grade 10 through virtual schooling in Ontario-Canada, as he is only 10 weeks away from completing his Class X.

The father has also been directed to ensure regular meetings between the boy and his mother, and to actively assist in rebuilding the relationship between the mother and son.

# Public meeting at Bhoma to oppose NH expansion

Locals demand bypass to save temples and culture

Team Herald

**PONDA:** Bhomkars have intensified their opposition to the proposed National Highway (NH) expansion at Bhoma and are calling for a bypass to protect their temples, culture, and traditional way of life.

## UNITED THEY OPPOSE

Protests and agitations have been ongoing for over two and a half years, with residents earlier submitting representations to various authorities including the Panchayat, PWD NH, the Union Transport Minister, and the President of India.

A public meeting of affected villagers has been scheduled for Sunday, 13 April at 5 pm at Sateri Temple, Bhoma. Sanjay Naik, a leader of the local movement, said that following this meeting, Goans across the State would be urged to support their cause.

Naik stated, "Our main

demand is a bypass for Bhoma. Even a decade ago, with the help of the former Opposition Leader and Chief Minister, the project was scrapped, and a bypass was proposed in the Regional Plan 2011 for Bhoma Panchayat. Now, the government wants to re-



vive the scrapped plan and widen the existing road instead of building a bypass."

He emphasised that Bhomkars are not against development. "Development must happen with public consent. India is a democratic country, and it is the government's responsibility to protect cultural and religious places. Widening the road will prevent us from participating in cultural events like the Kallo festival and the annual rathotsav procession.

The party that preaches Hindutva and Ramrajya is not listening to the genuine demands of Bhomkars."

He further added, "We demand a bypass to protect our temples and religious shrines. The temples existed long before the roads. The Sateri Temple and the lake opposite it are more than four centuries old. This lake is a heritage site. A flyover near these historic places will ruin the beauty and sanctity of at least five old religious structures."

Naik vowed that the fight would continue to preserve the area's heritage for future generations.

It may be recalled that Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari recently announced a sanctioned project of Rs 1,060.21 crore for the four-laning of a 7 km stretch from Bhoma to Old Goa. This announcement has sparked fresh concerns among residents, who fear the loss of Bhoma's religious and cultural identity.

# Doctors must upgrade or face termination: Min warns GMC staff

Vows reforms to raise standards in healthcare

Team Herald

**MAPUSA:** In a stern message aimed at raising standards in public healthcare, Health Minister Vishwajit Rane on Saturday warned that doctors at Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMC), Bambolim, who fail to upgrade their skills or keep pace with medical advancements, will face termination from service.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a mega medical camp held in Mapusa, Rane emphasised the government's strong commitment to providing top-tier medical care across the State.

"We want the best of services in the Goa Medical College. Those who cannot keep up with the evolving landscape of medical science and technology will not be retained," he said.

The Health Minister underscored that continuous learning and upskilling are now essential expectations from the medical fraternity—particularly at institutions like GMC, which form the backbone of Goa's public health system.

This move forms part of a broader government initiative to modernise healthcare infrastructure and improve

service delivery in state-run hospitals. Rane reiterated that accountability and performance would be the primary benchmarks going forward.

The announcement has sparked discussion within medical circles, with some welcoming the focus on excellence, while others have called for structured training opportunities and greater institutional support to help doctors stay abreast of developments in their field.

Referring to the overwhelming response to the medical camp, Rane said it was "truly heartening to see people from all walks of life coming together to avail free and comprehensive health services under one roof."

He also extended his thanks to Deputy Speaker Joshua D'Souza for his support and coordination in organising the camp, and for helping to bring essential health services closer to the people.

Also present at the camp were Director of Health Services Dr Rupa Naik, Dean of Goa Medical College Dr Shivanand Bandekar, and Dean of Goa Dental College Dr Ida De Noronha de Ataide.

# Rent-a-cab operators allege harassment by Mopa taxi drivers

Team Herald

**CALANGUTE:** Tensions have risen between Bardez-based rent-a-cab operators and Mopa airport taxi drivers, with the former alleging harassment of their customers by the latter.

The North Goa Rent-a-Cab Association has claimed that tourists renting their vehicles are being prevented from picking up family members at Mopa airport.

At a press conference held in Calangute on Saturday, the association cited the case of Shayla Chopra, a tourist from GK-3, New Delhi, who had rented a vehicle on 8 April and brought her own driver from Delhi. On 9 April, the driver, Rupesh Kumar, was sent to collect Chopra's minor daughter and friends from Mopa airport at 1 pm, but was allegedly stopped by local taxi drivers.

In his complaint lodged at Pernem Police Station, Kumar stated: "A group of taxi drivers led by Nikhil Mahale surrounded our car

and forced the minor girls to get off the vehicle. They threatened me with physical harm if we did not comply. They removed the luggage from the car, and one of them attempted to take the girls away in a taxi. The girls were frightened, and this caused serious mental harassment to them and my employers."

Kumar demanded strict action, saying, "This has ruined the tourism culture in Goa. Serious harm could have come to the children and to me due to the actions of the taxi drivers."

Ramdas Palkar, President of the North Goa Rent-a-Cab Association, condemned the incident: "Anyone who rents a vehicle has the right to drive it anywhere in Goa. This is clearly harassment of our customers. We, the owners, are not doing any airport or railway station pick-ups or drops. We follow all rules and regulations. There is no provision that says a customer cannot pick up their own family from an airport. We cannot accept this."

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