

After Rs 50 cr ‘renovation’, why is Kala Academy still in the dark?

Minister Govind Gaude blames ‘technical glitch’, not human error

Team Herald

MARGAO: Even after a Rs 50 crore renovation, the Kala Academy — Goa’s premier cultural venue — is facing basic operational failures, with no one willing to take responsibility. The recent light malfunction during a Marathi play has exposed not only technical flaws but also the absence of accountability among the agencies involved.

Art and Culture Minister Govind Gaude on Thursday termed the incident — where stage lights flickered and halted the performance for 10 minutes — as “unfortunate,” but was quick to dismiss it as a technical fault rather than human error.

But in the aftermath, all parties — the Public Works Department (PWD), the

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Kala Academy draws flak as lighting glitch disrupts Marathi play mid-show

Art and Culture Department, and the private agency that undertook the renovation of the Charles Correa-designed building — appear to be passing the buck, with no one stepping up to take ownership.

Addressing a press conference at Kala Academy, Gaude claimed the glitch stemmed from the system’s internal circuitry. “The entire lighting system in Dinanath Mangeshkar Kala Mandir uses LED lights by Canara, connected in a loop. A fault in even one light disrupts the entire chain,” he said. The system is current-

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— Govind Gaude, Art & Culture Minister

ly under a defect liability period and maintenance is the contractor’s responsibility, he added.

The minister admitted that the production of the Marathi play *Purush* began smoothly but was disrupted around 4.40 pm when one of the stage lights began to flicker, triggering a cascade failure of the entire stage lighting. The crew attempted to fix it via the

console but failed, forcing a 10-minute halt before halogen lights were used to resume the performance.

Gaude claimed the play’s set obstructed technicians from accessing the overhead batters to manually check each light — a task that would have required significant time.

Despite the public embarrassment, the minister insisted there was no neg-

ligence. “I’ve asked the Kala Academy’s Member Secretary to submit a detailed report,” he said, promising an upgrade of the existing lighting infrastructure.

Responding to criticism by actor Sharad Ponshe, who was vocal after his play was disrupted, Gaude went on the offensive. “He took my name in the media just to malign me. These people have taken supari to spoil my image,” he alleged. Gaude also refuted Ponshe’s claim that the production team did not use Kala Academy’s sound system. “If there’s a technical fault, it can be fixed. Why drag me into it?” he snapped.

The minister also said that a structural stability report of the building has been submitted, and only the inventory report is pending.

South Goa collector directs football clubs to halt housie games, wait for decision

Team Herald

MARGAO: South Goa District Collector Egna Cleetus has advised football clubs to temporarily suspend housie games conducted during matches, assuring that a decision on the matter will be taken in the coming days.

This development follows a meeting held on Thursday with a delegation led by Goa Football Association (GFA) President Caitano Fernandes, along with representatives from various football clubs. The delegation highlighted that housie games have traditionally been a crucial source of revenue for organising football tournaments at the grassroots level and requested the government to consider exempting football clubs from any restrictions.

Grassroots football takes a hit as several clubs report that current restrictions on the fund-raising game have already disrupted their tournament schedules

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Fernandes reiterated that the GFA’s only interest is to support and safeguard the functioning of football clubs across the state. “Even the Collector acknowledges that the issue requires careful consideration, especially in light of concerns about a potential nexus linked to housie operations. We have been asked to hold off for a few more days while the government works out a solution,” he stated.

Jeron Colaco, President of the Arlem Youth Association, emphasised the impact of the restrictions.

“These games are the life-line of local football tournaments. Without them, we have no means to cover expenses,” he said.

Adding to the plea, Arnaldo Costa also urged the government to intervene and grant an exemption to football clubs to continue conducting housie games.

Several clubs expressed that the current restrictions have already disrupted their tournament schedules, making it increasingly difficult to engage youth and sustain football activities in the absence of alternative funding mechanisms.

TEACHING THEM YOUNG



Primary and pre-primary students enjoy an excursion to Rudie’s organic farm in Sangolda, learning about agriculture, animal care, and sustainability — a valuable experience to teach children kindness, respect, and appreciation for nature’s bounty

GRLA lauds SC verdict on Urdu signage in Maha

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Global Romi Lipi Abhiyan (GRLA) has welcomed the recent Supreme Court ruling that permits the use of Urdu on the signboard of the new Patur Municipal Council building in Maharashtra, calling it a landmark decision that affirms India’s linguistic diversity and upholds the inclusive spirit of the Constitution.

“Urdu has often been opposed on the basis that it is a foreign language,” said Kennedy Afonso, president of the GRLA. “But the Supreme Court rightly emphasised that language must not become a cause for division in society. Instead, we should celebrate our diversity, including our many languages.”

Citing the observations of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and K. Vinod Chandran, Afonso reiterated: “Language is not a religion. It belongs to a community, a region, and a people — not to a religion. It reflects a culture and is a yardstick to measure the civilisational progress of a community.”

The GRLA believes the court’s verdict has significant implications for the status of the Roman script in Goa. According to the group, the script — widely used by Goa’s minority communities — has been systematically marginalised. It is neither recognised under the Official Language Act nor allowed in school curricula, with its detractors citing its foreign origins while overlooking its historical and cultural role.

“The Goa government and the Devanagari lobby seem to have overlooked the vital role Roman script has played in preserving and enriching Konkani across centuries,” Afonso said, calling on CM Pramod Sawant to take note of the Supreme Court’s ruling.

‘Can’t be taken for granted forever’: ST leaders intensify demand for political reservation

Team Herald

MARGAO: With the 2027 Goa Assembly elections drawing closer, leaders from the Scheduled Tribes (ST) community have intensified their demand for political reservation in the state legislature, calling on the government to honour their long-standing aspirations.

Expressing frustration over the lack of progress, tribal leaders warned that the community is closely watching the government’s actions and will respond appropriately at the polls.

In a recent meeting with BJP State President Damu Naik, the United Tribal Alliance Association (UTAA) urged the party to take up the matter with the central leadership and expedite the passage of the Bill for Political Reservation for STs in Goa.

Speaking to *O Herald*, Adv. John Fernandes, President of Mission for Political Reservation for ST, criticised the state government for its failure to introduce an ordinance supporting the reservation.

“Despite three sessions, the government has not acted. If they genuinely care about our community, they should bring in an ordinance now. The ST community cannot be taken for granted forever,” Fernandes said. “People are aware of the situation. Lessons will be taught at the right moment,” he cautioned.

Meanwhile, senior UTAA leader Prakash Velip expressed cautious optimism, saying he believes the government will make a formal announcement regarding political reservations for Goa’s ST community.

“Even the Union Home Min-

ister has shown a positive attitude toward our demand. We’re in constant contact with the concerned authorities in Delhi,” Velip said.

He added that UTAA had formally appealed to the BJP State President to intervene and support what they described as a rightful and overdue demand — the reservation of Assembly seats for the ST community beginning with the 2027 state elections.

According to Velip, the Bill for Political Reservation for STs was introduced in Parliament in August 2024 and was debated during the November 2024 session. “It was expected to be passed at that time, but remains pending. Both State and Central leaders had assured us it would be cleared during the Budget Session,” he noted.

South Goa road safety panel calls for patrol vehicles to curb illegal vending

Team Herald

MARGAO: At the recent meeting of the South Goa District Road Safety Committee, a strong demand was raised for the deployment of patrol vehicles along state and national highways to address the issue of illegal roadside vending.

Committee members expressed deep frustration over the continued failure to implement several key decisions taken in earlier meetings, particularly those focused on improving road safety.

The meeting was chaired by Deputy Collector (South) Avelina Pereira and attended by representatives from multiple government departments and agencies.

The committee was informed that the government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with an NGO to assist in removing stray cattle from

PWD PROMISES SAFETY MEASURES AT NAVELIM ACCIDENT SPOTS

MARGAO: Following a series of accidents — including a recent fatality at Navelim — Public Works Department (PWD) officials on Thursday visited the accident-prone service roads and assured residents that safety measures would be implemented within a week.

The site inspection came in response to mounting public pressure after the death of Philip Pereira in a road accident last month, followed by another serious mishap at Coldem-Navelim. Residents had earlier staged a protest demanding

urgent intervention.

PWD Engineer Rajesh Gaude conducted a personal inspection of the area, accompanied by concerned locals.

Villagers also gathered in Coldem, another accident-prone stretch, where they submitted a memorandum at the PWD office. The document called for the installation of speed breakers and proper signage along the service roads. Locals said poor visibility, lack of signage, and the absence of speed control measures were contributing to frequent accidents.

Consumer activist Lorna Fernandes voiced serious concern over the lack of follow-through on previously agreed decisions. On the issue of roadside vend-

ing, Fernandes urged the Public Works Department (PWD) to deploy a dedicated patrol vehicle to monitor and deter illegal vending along highways. Although some officials initially expressed reservations, the committee ultimately approved the proposal.

“There are urgent issues that need immediate attention. The PWD must conduct a comprehensive audit of roadside vendors and draw up a concrete plan for their removal,” said Deputy Collector Pereira.

She also pointed out that local governing bodies continue to collect sopo (fees) from roadside vendors, misleading them into believing their activities are lawful. “I have recommended that the PWD take active measures, including patrolling, to clear highways of vendors selling tender coconuts, fish, vegetables, and other items,” she added.

13 years on, ‘ultra-modern’ bus stand remains pipe dream

Since the foundation stone for the Rs 350 cr ‘transport hub’ in Margao was laid in 2011, the project has seen little progress

Team Herald

MARGAO: Despite repeated assurances from political leaders and the government regarding Margao’s development, citizens are questioning the prolonged delay surrounding the proposed Ultra-Modern Bus Stand — also known as the Fator-da-Margao Bus Terminus — envisioned to meet both current and future transport needs.

Just a day after Chief Minister Pramod Sawant reiterated his commitment to Margao’s development, the long-pending project remains stalled at the existing KTC bus stand site.

The last significant upgrade to the KTC facility wasn’t part of any long-term plan but a temporary facelift prompted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit. Inaugurated nearly 40 years ago in 1985, the bus stand had been operating from a makeshift, crumbling shed. Ahead of Modi’s



Viksit Bharat rally, the structure was replaced and the premises given a fresh hot-mix coat.

It was on Dussehra Day in 2011 that then Chief Minister Digambar Kamat laid the foundation stone for the proposed Ultra-Modern Bus Stand as part of efforts to upgrade the facility. Thirteen years on, neither that project nor the renamed Fator-da-Margao Bus Terminus has materialised.

Kamat recently stated that he had discussed the matter with the relevant Union Minister and is awaiting a response from the Centre. He also noted that the Goa government had,

in 2011, appointed a Delhi-based consultant to plan and design the facility.

In 2022, Transport Minister Mauvin Godinho told the Goa Legislative Assembly that the government was considering implementing the project under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.

“The modern bus stand at Margao is the need of the hour, and it is high time the political leaders from Margao and Fator-da take decisive action,” said Anthony Fernandes, a Salcete resident.

He pointed out that the current bus stand caters to hundreds of daily commuters, including inter-state travellers.

“This bus stand deserves to be modernised with all basic facilities — especially for the passengers,” said Prasnha Naik, a regular commuter from Canacona who travels to Panjim via Margao.

Goa students qualify for int’l robotics finals in Qatar

Primary schoolers among national awardees at Codeavour 6.0 championship

Team Herald

MARGAO: Three student teams from Goa, including two comprising children from Classes 1 to 4, have won accolades at the recently concluded Codeavour 6.0 India Nationals held this month, and have now qualified for the international showdown in Doha, Qatar. Their achievement stands out at a competition designed for students aged 7 to 18, where 161 teams from across the country battled it out in two challenging tracks.

The Goan students made it to the Nationals after impressing at the Codeavour Goa Regional Championship, held on February 16, at Saraswat Vidyalaya in Mapusa. A total of 16 teams from the State had advanced from the regional event. Organised by STEMPedia, Codeavour 6.0 is the world’s largest AI, coding, and robotics innovation challenge and features two core tracks—Innovation and Entrepreneurship, where students use AI/ML and app development to tackle real-world problems, and the Climate Action Challenge, a robotics-focused track where teams program robots to complete environment-related missions.

In the elementary category of the Climate Action Challenge, Team Pratham One from Goa bagged the 2nd Consolation Award. The team included Vedang Anay Kamat and Surabhi Shubhesh Manerikar from Sar-



aswat Vidyalaya, Mapusa, and Rajvi Vishwanath Marathe from Smt. Laxmibai Sanzgiri Memorial Primary School, Sankhali. Among just 12 national teams in their category, the trio rose to the occasion by completing complex environmental tasks using the Quarky robot and PictoBlox programming platform.

Also in the elementary category, Team Aryaveer received an Appreciation Award in the Innovation and Entrepreneurship track. Represented by Rajveer Mangish Dalvi and Aryan Laxmikant Lotlikar from Saraswat Vidyalaya, Mapusa, the team

impressed the jury with their creative use of technology to address global challenges aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Team Mahalasa Avengers, the third award-winning team of Hasti Subhash Patel, Barsharani Muduli, and Pranali Prabhakar Velip, represented Shree Mahalasa Narayani High School in Verna. Competing in the junior category of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship track, they earned an Appreciation Award for a tech-driven project tackling environmental and social challenges using AI tools and digital innovation.

Behind each team’s success were dedicated mentors—teachers, parents, and local guides—who not only helped with the technical aspects but also encouraged curiosity, teamwork, and resilience. For them, this journey has been a reflection of Goa’s growing emphasis on STEM education and the tangible impact of early exposure to coding and robotics.