

Mopa taxi drivers lock horns with govt over blue counter closure

Fume over GMR's decision, threaten to intensify agitation against ruling dispensation

Team Herald

PERNEM: Taxi drivers operating at the Manohar International Airport, Mopa, staged a protest on Monday against the continued closure of the blue taxi counter — an issue that has remained unresolved despite several attempts over the past two to three years.

The drivers parked their vehicles in the market area and later gathered for a meeting at the office of the Deputy Collector. The meeting was attended by Pernem MLA Pravin Arlekar, government officials, RTO representatives, and taxi drivers, and was seen as a crucial moment in the ongoing dispute.

During the discussions, Arlekar assured the protestors that efforts would be made to resolve the issue. However, former Pernem BJP Mandal president Tushidas Gawas voiced dissatisfaction, pointing out that



BUMPY RIDE: Taximen held a meeting with Pernem MLA Pravin Arlekar, government officials, and RTO representatives

the matter had been raised multiple times with local authorities, including the MLA and GMR Goa International Airport Ltd, but no substantial steps had been taken.

Gawas criticised the local MLA for failing to give the issue due attention and

said, "Since our local MLA is not addressing this issue properly, this situation keeps arising again and again. We stand with the people of Pernem taluka, and the Chief Minister must immediately intervene and resolve this issue."

Taxi drivers warned that if the government continued to ignore their grievances, they would express their displeasure at the forthcoming Assembly elections. They further cautioned that continued closure of the counter would have electoral repercussions.

The protest underscores growing frustration within the local taxi community, who accuse both the local MLA and the authorities of inaction and lack of accountability.

Man sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment for sexual exploitation

Team Herald

VASCO: The Fast Track Court, Panjim (POCSO), on Monday convicted and sentenced Mainuddin Pathan of New Vaddem, Vasco, to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment in a case of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Pathan was convicted under Sections 376 and 370 of the IPC and was sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment, along with a fine of Rs 50,000. In default, he will serve an additional three months of rigorous imprisonment. Under Section 4 of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1986, he was sentenced to two years in prison and fined Rs 1,000, with a default sentence of 15 days' imprisonment. Under Section 5 of the same Act, he was sentenced to seven years of rigorous imprisonment, with a fine of Rs 2,000, or 15 days' imprisonment in default. Additionally, under Section 7 of the Act, he was sentenced to three months' imprisonment, and under

Fed up with the ongoing abuse, the victim managed to escape and sought help, eventually approaching the Vasco police. A case was immediately registered, and Pathan was arrested. The victim was later reunited with her family with the assistance of NGOs

Section 323 of the IPC, to one year's rigorous imprisonment with a fine of Rs 1,000, or 15 days' imprisonment in default. Under Section 506 of the IPC, he was sentenced to two years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 10,000, or 15 days' imprisonment in default. All sentences will run concurrently, the court ruled.

Should the fines be realised on all counts, the total amount will be paid to the victim once the appeal period has passed. The detention period from November 14, 2019, to the present will be deducted from the total sentence.

In November 2019, following a complaint lodged by a young woman from Delhi, the Vasco police arrested the accused. The vic-

tim, who had come to Goa seeking better prospects, was initially offered shelter by Pathan. However, he later sexually exploited, assaulted, abused, and forced her into prostitution.

Fed up with the ongoing abuse, the victim managed to escape and sought help, eventually approaching the Vasco police. A case was immediately registered, and Pathan was arrested. The victim was later reunited with her family with the assistance of NGOs.

The case was investigated by the Vasco police under the supervision of DySP Nilesh Rane, with head constables Santosh Bhatkar and Sachin Bandekar, and constable Gauresh Satardekar playing key roles in the arrest and investigation.

Two arrested with hydroponic weed worth Rs 17 lakh

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Anti-Narcotics Cell (ANC) of Goa Police on Monday arrested two individuals, Raviraj Rivonkar, 26, from Verna, and Lingu Donur, 35, from Margao, for allegedly possessing 170 grams of high-quality hydroponic ganja, valued at Rs 17 lakh in the international market.

According to police, the arrests were made following a raid at the new bus stand at Patto. A car used by the accused was also seized during the operation.

Efforts are ongoing to trace the source from where the drugs were procured, police said. The raid was led by PSI Girish Padloskar, along with ANC staff, under the guidance and leadership of DySP Nerlon Albuquerque and SP ANC Sunita Sawant. Further investigations are being conducted by PSI Girish Padloskar.

It may be recalled that recently, the ANC had busted a massive drug haul and arrested a Kerala native

with LSD liquid worth Rs 11.07 crore.

Sources revealed that a significant market for hydroponic weed has developed in the State, as it is considered the purest form of cannabis and is difficult to obtain. Legally cultivated in Thailand, hydroponic weed is regarded as far superior to traditional ganja, as it is grown without soil under controlled, hybrid conditions, with seeds cultivated on small, short-statured plants. There is a growing craze for this type of cannabis among addicts, who seek a stronger and more refined experience compared to conventional ganja. It is freely available in Thailand at a dirt cheap rate.

"The party scene at nightclubs in Goa attracts high-end tourists who are always keen to experiment with new drugs. Essentially, young people between the ages of 26 and 35, who have considerable disposable income, are the ones spending on such substances for a better high," an ANC official said.

Police conduct combing operations, hotel checks and preventive arrests

Security drive sees verification of tenants, foreigners and Kashmiris across North and South Goa

Team Herald

PANJIM/MARGAO: Goa Police intensified security measures across the State on Monday, verifying five persons from Jammu and Kashmir, 48 foreigners, and thousands of tenants as part of continued combing operations and special drives.

According to police, the operations covered both districts extensively. In North Goa, combing operations were carried out at locations including St Inez, Chimbol, Bambolim, Mapusa Market, Starco Junction, Anjuna, Durga Nagar, Colvale, Malpem Railway Station, Arambol, the Labour Colony at Mopa Airport, and several villages such as Socorro, Pilerne, Candolim, Sangolda, Bicholim, Mayem, Sanquelim, and Valpoi.

A total of 1,129 tenants and 431 house helps were verified in North Goa. Police rounded up 556 suspected persons, arrested 15 under preventive action, and filled 40 stranger rolls.

In South Goa, combing op-



Police conduct a tenant verification drive at Anjuna

erations covered Zuarinagar, Mongul, Sanguem, Fatorda, Mormugao, Canacona, Birla, and sensitive transit hubs such as Margao, Canacona, and Curchorem railway stations, as well as the bus stands at Margao and Ponda.

Over the past three days, South Goa Police verified 3,078 tenants, 22 strangers, and checked 204 guest houses. A total of 563 persons were arrested, and 177 foreigners were checked. In addition, 78

Kashmiris residing in South Goa were verified.

As part of the measures, suspicious vehicles were stopped and searched at Nakabandis, and preventive arrests were made where necessary. Stranger Rolls were updated during the checks.

Police further conducted verifications of tenants and domestic servants and inspected C-Forms and hotel registers at hotels, guest houses, and homestays. Hotel staff and owners were

instructed to maintain proper registers and immediately report any suspicious persons or activity to the police station.

Tenant verification drives were specifically undertaken under the jurisdictions of Colva, Canacona, Vasco, Mardol, and Collem police stations. Police reiterated the need for vigilance, particularly in tourist-heavy areas, as part of efforts to enhance public safety and security across Goa.

Six DySPs transferred

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Goa Police Department announced the transfer of six Deputy Superintendents of Police (DySP) on Monday, with immediate effect.

According to an official order, the transfers were made based on the recommendations of the Police Establishment Board.

SDPO Mapusa Sandesh Chodankar has been transferred and appointed as Deputy Superintendents of Police (GRP A, B, C, D, & E Coy), with additional responsibility as DySP for Armoury, MT, and Escort Cell. DySP Coastal Security, Shaikh Salim, has been moved to the position of SDPO Pernem.

SDPO Pernem Ashish Shirodkar has been re-assigned to the post of SDPO Quepem, while DySP MT, Wilson D'Souza, has been appointed as SDPO Mapusa.

DySP (GRP A, B, C, D, & E Coy) Roy Inacio

Pereira has been transferred to the role of DySP Coastal Security, and SDPO Quepem, Sagar Ekoskar, has been posted as DySP Security, with the additional charge of DySP (Headquarters) Panjim.

These transfers are part of the department's routine reshuffle aimed at strengthening its operational efficiency.

DySP Ashish Shirodkar was transferred to Quepem within six months of his posting at Pernem. He was also holding additional charge of Mapusa police station.

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Activist serves legal notice to coastal authority over 'fake' NOC issued for Bambolim hotel wall

Team Herald

PANJIM: Activist Swapnesh Sherlekar has served a legal notice to the Goa Coastal Zone Management Authority (GCZMA), demanding the withdrawal or revocation of the No-Objection Certificate (NOC) granted to a starred hotel to construct a wall at Bambolim. He has also called for the filing of a complaint against the former Managing Director of GCZMA and the hotel firm for respectively issuing and using a fake NOC/document as genuine, despite it being false.

Taking strong objection to the GCZMA's action in withdrawing the stop-work order-cum-show-cause notice — arguing that the hotel firm had made no

case for seeking such relief — Sherlekar has urged the Authority to withdraw or revoke the NOC dated 23 September 2021 issued to the hotel firm, stating that the NOC in question was bad in law and void ab initio.

In his notice, he also urged the GCZMA to demolish the illegal construction of the wall at Bambolim beach for being in violation of Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) regulations.

Sherlekar, in his notice, stated that during the 271st meeting of the GCZMA held on 21 September 2021, a decision was taken to approve the construction of a wall. However, he pointed out that there was no discussion or agenda item pertaining to the application of the

hotel firm, any project in Bambolim village, or the proposed seawall at Bambolim beach. He claimed that the agenda to approve the construction of the said wall was neither considered nor decided upon, and alleged that the then Member Secretary of GCZMA had committed fraud and forgery by creating a false document/ NOC with the intent to cause damage to the environment and the public, and to support the hotel firm's claim that it had obtained the NOC by all legal means.

Sherlekar further stated that a case should also be registered against the hotel firm for using the fake/false NOC as genuine despite knowing it to be false.

Congress to protest in city on inflation, drug menace today

Team Herald

PANJIM: Under the banner of the Samvidhan Bachao Abhiyan, Goa Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) will hold a protest meeting on Tuesday, at Azad Maidan, at 4 pm to highlight a series of growing concerns affecting the State, ranging from the rising cost of living to alleged government inaction on key social and economic issues.

Party leaders said the event would serve as a platform for Goans to voice their frustrations over what they describe as a deepening crisis of governance. Key issues being raised include the uncontrolled price rise of essential commodities, breakdown of law and order, increasing drug menace, atrocities against Dalits and women, and a worsening unemployment crisis.

AITUC accuses government of being 'anti-labour'

Team Herald

PANJIM: The All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) Goa on Monday alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in the state, led by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, is "out and out an anti-labour government".

"Whatever they say about working for the labourers, the fact is that this government is anti-labour and pro-management. It imposed the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) for pharmaceutical companies and has been extending it every six months. On the other hand, the pharmaceutical companies are torturing workers. Workers are being suspended or transferred to states like Sikkim or Jammu and Kashmir. While the Chief Minister says we need to bring back those Goans who are trapped in Kashmir because the state is facing terrorism, these companies are sending the Goans to the same state," AITUC Goa General Secretary Christopher Fonseca said, while addressing a press conference in the city.

"While the workers of the pharmaceutical companies are facing different types of problems, the government has again extended ESMA for six months. We have challenged it in the High Court and we are awaiting the verdict on this," he added.

Fonseca alleged that the state government has not solved any of the problems faced by workers.

"Be it workers at Panchayats, Goa Dairy, pre-primary helpers, the PWD Labour Supply Society, or Anganwadi helpers and teachers, problems of none of them have been solved. The government should be an exemplary employer, but it is not so. There are protests in all the talukas. Why? If the government is sympathetic, there should not be protests if development in the real sense is taking place," he stated.

Fonseca further informed that on the occasion of Labour Day, AITUC Goa will take out a rally from the Kranti Circle at the Kadamba Bus Stand to the Municipal Garden in the city and hold a public meeting there.

Traffic diversion at Dabolim Airport welcome gate from today

Team Herald

VASCO: The Vasco Traffic Police have announced a traffic diversion at the Dabolim international airport welcome gate, effective from Tuesday, April 29, due to welding work for steel erection as part of the on-

going terminal extension project.

The diversion will be in place from 7.30 am to 11.30 am daily and is expected to continue until May 9. During this period, both vehicles and pedestrians will be required to use the current exit area to enter the airport.

Traffic police will be stationed to guide and manage the diverted flow of traffic. Authorities have urged commuters to exercise caution when approaching the Dabolim airport welcome gate, apologising for any inconvenience caused during the construction works.

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