

RENOVATION, RECTIFICATION, EXPLANATION...

Kala Academy's theatre of the absurd plays on

CM says contractor will finish work and then be blacklisted; but why take on a contractor who is sub-standard, ask critics

Team Herald

PANJIM: A day after O Herald reported that Kala Academy is slated to shut down again for two months for 'rectification' work, there was all-round criticism for the delay in finishing the upgrade of the State's premier art and culture address.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant responded to the criticism on Friday, saying that the current contractor will complete the rectification work at no additional cost as per the recommendations of the Kala Academy Task Force and complete it by October.

"As per the Committee's suggestion, the contractor will fix all issues from past tenders free of cost by October. Once that is done, the contract will be terminated and the contractor will be blacklisted," Sawant said, adding that new tenders will be floated for additional works not covered in the original contract.

However, the announcement has only intensified political backlash and public frustration over what is widely seen as a case of bureaucratic inefficiency and poor accountability.

The Goa Forward Party (GFP), which has repeatedly



“Why was a contractor with such poor work ethics selected in the first place? What about the officials and decision-makers who approved these tenders? Who will ensure taxpayers aren't further burdened by such blatant mismanagement?”
— Goa Forward Party, in a statement

“What the Chief Minister said today is confusing. Why will a contractor carry out proper work if he knows he will be blacklisted? We are not convinced... We are encouraged by the assurance that the Task Force will remain involved until the work is completed to its satisfaction”
— Francis Coelho, Kala Rakhan Mand

ly raised concerns over the quality and pace of the Kala Academy project, responded with a scathing statement. "Chief Minister Dr Pramod P Sawant's statement today acknowledging the termination and blacklisting of the contractor vindicates our relentless fight for accountability. But this admission raises even more questions," the party said.

"Why was a contractor with such poor work ethics selected in the first place? What about the officials and decision-makers who approved these tenders? Who will ensure taxpayers aren't further burdened by such blatant mismanage-

ment?" GFP asked, calling for a thorough investigation into the entire tendering and execution process.

"The Kala Academy, a cultural icon of Goa, deserves better than this cycle of negligence and corruption," the statement added, warning that this was not an isolated incident but indicative of a systemic governance failure.

Adding to the chorus of criticism, Francis Coelho of the Kala Rakhan Mand expressed doubts over the CM's assurance. "What the Chief Minister said today is confusing. Why will a contractor carry out proper work if he knows he will be blacklisted? We are not

convinced," Coelho said.

He revealed that three reports have already been submitted by the group, demanding audits and restoration of Kala Academy to its original standards. "We will submit our next report to the Chief Minister and hope for clarity. We are encouraged by the assurance that the Task Force will remain involved until the work is completed to its satisfaction," Coelho added.

Coelho also demanded a forensic audit of the open-air auditorium that collapsed in 2023, further underscoring concerns over the integrity of the ongoing renovation work.

A DIFFERENT HIGH



ITBP jawans upon reaching the summit of Mount Makalu, the fifth highest peak in the world, on Friday

Govt only bothered about mining and not humans, say Shirgao residents

Villagers challenge lease agreements in High Court, demand buffer zone of 200 metres from the last house near mining boundary

Team Herald

PANJIM: Residents of Shirgao have strongly opposed the government's mining lease agreement with Salgaocar Shipping Company Pvt Ltd, which they claim was signed without addressing local concerns. They point out that as per the agreement, there would only be a 150-metre buffer from the compound wall of the Shree Lairai Devi Temple, demanding instead that the buffer zone extend at least 200 metres from the last house near the mining boundary.

Vijay Gaonkar, a villager, alleged that the government is forcibly attempting to restart mining operations in the village. "We have been demanding that houses, schools, temples, and agricultural lands be excluded from the mining lease areas. But nothing has been done. We've now challenged this in the High Court. We want a minimum 200-metre buffer — not just 150 metres — from the



“If mining resumes, wells, lakes, and springs will dry up, creating a severe water crisis”
— Vijay Gaonkar, villager

“We are demanding exclusion of houses, temples, schools, and farms from lease areas, compensation for affected families, proper demarcation of mining boundaries and a 200-metre buffer zone”
— Dinanath Gaonkar, president of Shirgao Nagrik Samiti

last house near the mining boundary," he said.

Gaonkar also revealed that a report by the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) had warned of serious environmental consequences if mining resumes. "NEERI clearly

stated that the groundwater recharge system was severely impacted by past mining in Shirgao. If mining resumes, wells, lakes, and springs will dry up, creating a severe water crisis," he warned.

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Indian climber scales Everest, dies while descending

PTI, KOLKATA: Hours after conquering Mt Everest, a 44-year-old mountaineer of West Bengal died on Friday, while descending from the summit, his family said.

Subrata Ghosh, a school teacher by profession and a veteran mountaineer, hailed from Ranaghat in Nadia district of West Bengal.

"We got the news from Nepal that my elder brother has died near the Hillary Step while coming down after scaling Mt Everest. I do not know what exactly happened to him. He had been absolutely fine. We expect to hear in detail from his sherpa," Ghosh's brother Surajit told PTI.

The Hillary Step is a 40-foot vertical rock face that sits 8,790 metres above sea level on the southeast ridge of Mount Everest.

Ghosh had reached the summit along with his guide around 2 pm (Nepal time) on Thursday, his brother said.

"What we have learnt till now is that he started showing signs of exhaustion while descending, and he was reluctant to leave the Hillary Step. His sherpa returned without him to Camp IV after that... I was told that the Sherpa is also ill," he said.

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Global life expectancy dropped 1.8 years since Covid-19: WHO

AGENCY, NEW DELHI: In a new report by the World Health Organisation (WHO) there has been a drop in global life expectancy by 1.8 years between 2019 and 2021, the biggest decline in recent history.

According to the World Health Statistics 2025 report, the pandemic not only took lives but also severely affected the quality of life around the world.

The report revealed that increased cases of anxiety and depression during the pandemic cut healthy life expectancy by six weeks globally.

The report shows a mixed picture of health progress. While some progress has been made, such as 1.4 billion more people living healthier lives due to reduced tobacco use, better air quality, and improved access to water and sanitation, there is a worrying slowdown in other areas.

Only 431 million more people were able to get necessary health services without facing financial hardship, and just 637 million had better protection against health emergencies.

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Covid-19 wave makes a comeback in Asia

Cases increase in Hong Kong, Singapore, China, Thailand

AGENCY, NEW DELHI: Signalling a concerning resurgence of the virus that first emerged over five years ago, Covid-19 cases are rising once again across several parts of Asia. Densely-populated financial centres such as Hong Kong and Singapore have reported significant increases in infections, while health agencies in China and Thailand are also grappling with fresh outbreaks. Despite previous periods of relative stability, the current wave is unfolding in a season when respiratory vi-

rus usually subside. Following a marked increase in Covid cases, Hong Kong's Centre for Health Protection has issued a public alert. Albert Au, head of the Centre's Communicable Disease Branch, has said that the percentage of respiratory samples testing positive for the virus have reached its highest level since last year.

In the week ending May 3, Hong Kong recorded 31 severe cases — the highest weekly total reported in a year.

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Battered on duty, policeman's ordeal a blow to morale of force

No progress in police probe as assailant seen roaming freely despite complaint; begs the question: are cops colluding?

AUGUSTO RODRIGUES

PANJIM: Sixty-six-year-old Mangal Narvekar's cry for justice for her son, who serves in the police force, is a stark reminder to all in Goa: if the police themselves cannot get justice, what hope is there for the common man?

The realisation that the police cannot be entrusted with protecting their own struck Mangal when officers failed to arrest the man allegedly responsible for grievously assaulting her son, Rohan Narvekar, while he was on duty in the early hours of May 1.

Rohan, attached to the Quepem Police Station as a PC driver, filed a supplementary complaint on May 9, 2025 — eight days after the incident

“It's clear from the way the person who attacked my son is being protected by his superiors that something is not right... My son went to protect his superior, got abused and assaulted, had to be hospitalised and spend days at home recovering, while the man who attacked him walks around freely”
— Mangal Narvekar, mother of the victim

— against Joyson Fernandes and six unknown persons. The charges included obstructing a public servant from discharging lawful duties, using abusive language, and assault causing grievous injury, filed under Sections 221, 352, 132, 121(1), 116 read with 3(5) of the BNS.

Police records show that while four individuals were arrested and later released on bail following the initial complaint

filed by Rohan's senior, Joyson — allegedly the primary aggressor — was not among them. It was only after Rohan filed his supplementary complaint that Joyson applied for anticipatory bail on May 13, which was promptly granted, leaving many junior officers dismayed.

"Despite assaulting our colleague, the accused Joyson was seen roaming freely. We even shared a photo of his birthday

“Despite assaulting our colleague, the accused was seen roaming freely. We even shared a photo of his birthday celebrations with the investigating PI, but he kept saying the accused couldn't be located”
— A policeman, on condition of anonymity

celebrations with the investigating PI, but he kept saying the accused couldn't be located," said a policeman, speaking on condition of anonymity. "This may affect the morale of the force, but let's look at it as a one-off incident. Look at the bigger picture before drawing negative conclusions," admitted Quepem SDPO Ashish Shirodkar.

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Salman Rushdie attacker sentenced to 25 years in prison

AP, MAYVILLE (US): The man convicted of stabbing Salman Rushdie on a New York lecture stage in 2022, leaving the prizewinning author blind in one eye, was sentenced Friday to serve 25 years in prison.

A jury found Hadi Matar, 27, guilty of attempted murder and assault in February.

Rushdie did not return to court to the western New York courtroom for his assailant's sentencing but submitted a victim impact statement.

During the trial, the 77-year-old author was the key witness, describing how he believed he was dying when a masked attacker plunged a knife into his head and body more than a dozen times as he was being introduced at the Chautauqua Institution to speak about writer safety.



Accused Hadi Matar at Chautauqua County Courthouse in New York

Before being sentenced, Matar stood and made a statement about freedom of speech in which he called Rushdie a hypocrite. "Salman Rushdie wants to disrespect other people," said Matar, clad in white-striped jail clothing and wearing handcuffs. "He wants to be a bully, he wants to bully other people. I don't agree with that."

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MAX. TEMP 35 °C
MIN. TEMP 27.4 °C

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Only the valuables are missing — the CM is untouched!