

## Covid tiptoes back into Goa with a confirmed case

Experts say there is no cause for alarm because of vaccine-induced immunity, call for more screening

AJIT JOHN  
ajit@herald-goa.com

PANJIM: Covid has made a quiet return to Goa, with a 70-year-old man from Vasco testing positive. He was shifted to Goa Medical College (GMC) on Sunday. The case was confirmed by a senior doctor, who spoke on condition of anonymity. With this, Goa joins the list of States — alongside Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Kerala — where new Covid cases, including those involving recent variants, have been reported. Nationwide, around 257 cases have been reported.

Dr Utkarsh Betodkar, State epidemiologist, said there is no need for fear or anxiety, as isolated cases were anticipated. "Thanks to widespread vaccination, most people have developed immunity," he explained. "Unless there's a significant mutation, we are likely to see only a mild uptick in cases. Some might be more severe than others, but the overall trend remains manageable."

He added that the government has maintained its post-pandemic surveillance by testing patients with Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI) and other related symptoms. "This

**WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

- Goa reports first new Covid case even as 257 are reported elsewhere in the country
- Almost everyone is vaccinated, so immunity level is more
- Unless there is a virulent mutant, there is no cause for concern
- Surveillance ongoing, claims government
- Anyone with flu or respiratory illnesses should consult doctor

Thanks to widespread vaccination, most people have developed immunity. Unless there's a significant mutation, we are likely to see only a mild uptick in cases. Some might be more severe than others, but the overall trend remains manageable — Dr Utkarsh Betodkar, State epidemiologist.

We are far better prepared today. Public awareness has increased, and hopefully, the number of cases will stay low. At my clinic, I still follow all essential protocols. There is no need to panic. Anyone with flu-like symptoms or severe respiratory issues should consult a doctor immediately — Dr Anil Mehndiratta, former President IMA

allows us to track trends in illness. Even though Covid may appear to recede, it has the potential to return. The only major concern would be a strong mutation, which we are not seeing at present," he said.

Dr Betodkar also noted that regular checks for influenza and other respira-

tory illnesses continue to be conducted. "These checks help identify any rise in infections. So far, there's been no increase in Goa. Historically, we see a surge after the monsoon, around September-October, and again in February-March. Those are the peak periods for testing. As of now, there are

no new guidelines from the government," he concluded. Dr Varsha Munj from North Goa District Hospital assured that their lab is fully prepared to deal with any resurgence. "We have trained staff — many of whom were recruited during the pandemic — along with an isolation ward, an ICU for critical cases, and a genome sequencing lab in Goa. We are fully ready," she said.

Meanwhile, Rajendra Borkar from South Goa District Hospital confirmed that no cases have been reported in South Goa so far. "There is no indication of Covid in the area at this time. If that changes, we will act based on instructions from the head office," he stated.

Dr Anil Mehndiratta, former President of the Indian Medical Association (IMA), stressed the importance of continued vigilance. "We are far better prepared today. Public awareness has increased, and hopefully, the number of cases will stay low. At my clinic, I still follow all essential protocols. There is no need to panic. Anyone with flu-like symptoms or severe respiratory issues should consult a doctor immediately," he advised.

## Claim: 99% work complete Reality: City far from smart

Forget fancy tags, even basic utilities and sewerage lines are dysfunctional, say residents

Team Herald

PANJIM: Even as the bosses of Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Limited (IPSCDL) continue to insist that major infrastructure work in the capital is nearly complete, citizens say otherwise. Residents of Panjim have raised serious concerns over the chaotic state of roads, incomplete sewerage lines, and a lack of coordination — symptoms of what many now call a directionless urban project.

Chief General Manager Eduardo Pereira, who is overseeing operations in the absence of CEO and MD Sanjit Rodrigues, stated that 99% of the capital's Smart City work has been completed. However, the on-ground reality has prompted public outrage, especially as basic infrastructure continues to crumble.

To make matters worse, the unseasonal rains on Tuesday exposed the hollowness of these claims. Several roads that had reportedly been 'completed' were waterlogged, pointing to poor execution and incomplete drainage infrastructure.

"The situation is chaotic," said Advocate Rui Ferreira. "There are dug-up stretches everywhere, unfinished roads, and no clear sig-



Labourers fitting pavers as part of the ongoing Smart City works in Panjim, on Tuesday

### FOCUS SHIFTS TO PANJIM'S BIG CONCERN — WASTE MANAGEMENT

PANJIM: Panjim is now shifting its focus to waste management without the use of landfill sites and the Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Limited (IPSCDL) has received the first instalment of Rs 7.5 crore from the total project allocation of Rs 135 crore for this purpose. "We are now managing waste without relying on a landfill," said IPSCDL Chief General Manager Eduardo Pereira. "We've begun creating awareness about waste segregation at source in 33 residential colonies, and plan to expand this initiative across all of Panjim. Some colonies are already implementing 16-way waste segregation. Panjim has around 180 residential colonies. There will be no landfill site in Panjim."

Cont on Pg 11 >>

nage. It's unclear who is digging, what's being dug, and for what purpose. The road in front of the Police Headquarters is in terrible shape — extremely unsafe for two-wheeler riders and

elderly pedestrians." Ferreira didn't mince words about what he sees as the broader implications of the project: "Smart City is a man-made disaster. It was more about outsmart-

ing the citizens of Panjim than uplifting the city. Public money has been spent, but there's no visible improvement in our quality of life. In fact, the opposite has happened — the city has been torn apart. It's like the Union government was busy changing the rupee symbol while ignoring the real economic issues."

Adding to the chorus of concern, Panjim resident Sanjay Sarmalkar highlighted serious environmental and health risks resulting from the poorly executed sewerage system.

"Forget completion — some of the most basic utilities aren't even functional. Sewerage lines are still not commissioned," Sarmalkarsaid.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

## WAQF CASE HEARING Need strong, glaring case for interim relief: SC to petitioners

PTI, NEW DELHI: Underscoring the "presumption of constitutionality in favour of law", the Supreme Court on Tuesday said petitioners challenging the waqf law needed a "strong and glaring" case for interim relief.

A bench comprising Chief Justice B R Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih commenced the hearing on a batch of pleas challenging the validity of Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 for passing interim orders on three issues, including the power to denote properties declared as "waqf by courts, waqf-by-user or waqf by deed".

"There is a presumption of constitutionality in favour of every statute. For interim relief, you have to make out a very strong and glaring case. Otherwise, presumption of constitutionality will be there," the CJ said when senior advocate Kapil Sibal, leading the charge against the legislation, began his submissions.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

MAX. TEMP 34.0 °C  
MIN. TEMP 27.1 °C

idharudhar



Sir, the crime isn't down at all — our lines are down.

## HEAT IS ON



People stand near a vehicle spraying mist for respite from the scorching heat on a hot summer day, at Hawa Mahal in Jaipur, Rajasthan, on Tuesday

## Tiatr set for long intermission as govt shuts main auditoriums

Tiatr community braces for gloomy monsoon which also prevents outdoor shows

Team Herald

MARGAO: As monsoon clouds gather over Goa, so too does a storm of uncertainty for the State's cherished cultural heritage — the Tiatr. The two most important auditoriums for tiatr — Ravindra Bhavan in Margao and the Kala Academy in Panjim — are set to close for repair work during July and August.

With outdoor performances impossible during the monsoons and indoor auditoriums shuttered for maintenance, tiatrists are left without a stage — and without income. These two months

are crucial for tiatrists, and the simultaneous closure of both venues has left producers, directors and hundreds of artists in distress.

No alternative auditoriums have been deemed technically or acoustically suitable for large-scale performances, leaving the industry staring at an acute crisis.

Ravindra Bhavan officials have already informed tiatr directors that the main auditorium will remain closed for maintenance and repair work in July and August. This was followed by an announcement from Chief Minister Dr Pramod Sawant that the Kala

Everyone knows there are no village shows during the monsoon. With both our primary venues shutting down, we are left with no stage, no shows, and no income. Has anyone even thought about what this means for the tiatr community?

— Roseferns, Veteran tiatr director

Tiatr is one of the few Goan cultural activities that still draw large, paying audiences. Yet we are watching it decline. Hundreds of artists depend entirely on tiatr for their livelihood. What happens to them now?

— Pascoal de Chicalim, tiatr

Academy too would undergo repairs during the same period, following recommendations from a task force.

Veteran tiatr director Rose-

ferns expressed grave concern while speaking to O Herald. "Everyone knows there are no village shows during the monsoon. With both our primary

venues shutting down, we are left with no stage, no shows and no income. Has anyone even thought about what this means for the tiatr community?" he asked.

He further stated that alternative venues, such as the newly inaugurated Ravindra Bhavan in Canacona, are not viable due to poor sound quality and technical limitations that hamper the performance standards expected in professional tiatr.

Echoing his views, fellow tiatr director Pascoal de Chicalim warned of the consequences of neglecting Goa's most popular theatrical art form.

"Tiatr is one of the few Goan cultural activities that still draws large, paying audiences. Yet we are allowing it to fade away. Hundreds of artists depend entirely on tiatr for their livelihood. What happens to them now?"

Several other tiatr directors also spoke to O Herald, sharing similar concerns and urging authorities to either postpone the repairs or provide alternative venues equipped with the necessary facilities.

As the clock ticks toward July, the tiatr fraternity anxiously awaits action to avert a cultural and economic crisis.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

## South Goa MP to boycott VP's Mormugao port event

Capt Viriato Fernandes decries coal handling, calls the inauguration a 'private function to legitimise harmful development'

Team Herald

PANJIM: South Goa MP Capt Viriato Fernandes is likely to boycott the inauguration of a covered dome for coal handling and the commencement of operations of two harbour mobile cranes at Mormugao Port, an event scheduled to be attended by Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar.

Capt Fernandes has criticised the event, calling it a private function orchestrated by the Mormugao Port Authority (MPA) in collaboration with private commercial interests. He

alleged that the organisers are using the Vice President's presence to legitimise development activities that are harmful to the State and its people.

He expressed strong opposition to coal transportation in the port town, highlighting its adverse impact on public health, including respiratory illnesses and skin disorders among local residents.

He also pointed to the double-tracking of railway lines in Velsao village, which he claimed is intended to facilitate coal movement, and accused RVNL authorities of block-

ing residents' access to their own homes.

Capt Fernandes in a letter addressed to Dhankhar further stated that expansion projects, dredging and increased berthing activity at MPA have caused significant damage to marine biodiversity in the Zuari and Mandovi river estuaries, threatening fragile ecosystems.

Traditional fishermen, or ramponkars, have reportedly suffered due to declining fish populations caused by these activities, severely affecting their livelihoods.

Cont on Pg 11 >>