

Goa govt clears road for app-based taxis with landmark Aggregator Policy

For a tourist State long paralysed by a taxi deadlock, this marks a decisive turning point

Team Herald

PANJIM: In a move expected to transform the State's transport landscape, the Goa government has officially notified the Goa Transport Aggregator Guidelines 2025, paving the way for regulated app-based taxi services across the state. Long resisted by local taxi unions, the entry of aggregators now comes with a policy framework that attempts to balance passenger convenience with driver welfare.

"This is not just about tourists. From working women and senior citizens to persons with disabilities, every Goan deserves access to safe and reliable transport," said Pravimal Abhishek, Director of Transport. He added, "Even if just 3% of Goa's population uses taxis daily, locals still generate more trips than tourists. This is a systemic issue affecting residents, not just a tourism concern."

Despite a high vehicle-to-population ratio—882 vehicles per 1,000 people, more than three

DRIVER PROTECTIONS

- 100% of fare goes to driver (no commission deductions)
- Fares fixed by government: Rs 32/km (avg)
- Aggregator commissions must be absorbed by platforms
- 72-hour payment window for drivers
- Penalty: 25% if aggregators delay payments



SPECIAL SUPPORT FOR WOMEN DRIVERS

- Rs 1 lakh EV subsidy
- Rs 30,000 vehicle insurance reimbursement
- Rs 10 lakh health insurance (also covers parents & children)

WELFARE & INCENTIVES

- Rs 10 lakh health cover for all app-registered drivers (5% annual increment)
- Up to Rs 20,000 vehicle insurance reimbursement
- Open access: drivers can join multiple apps

SAMPLE FARES (all-inclusive)

- Dabolim to Panjim: Rs 1,068
- Mopa to Panjim: Rs 1,487
- Panjim to Margao: Rs 1,296
- Panjim to Palolem: Rs 2,173

times the national average—Goa's mobility challenges have only grown.

The lack of digital integration in taxi services has led to increased dependence

on private vehicles, worsening congestion, parking shortages, accidents, and

pollution. While public demand for app-based taxis has steadily increased, local taxi operators have remained wary, citing examples from other states where aggregators' discount-driven models and high commission rates have reportedly reduced driver incomes. In such cases, platforms have charged up to 30% commission per ride, leaving drivers with a fraction of the fare.

Goa's new policy directly addresses this concern. "Drivers will receive 100% of the government-notified fare. Any commissions will have to be borne by the platform," said Abhishek. The current average notified fare stands at Rs 32 per kilometre. Including platform charges and taxes, passengers will pay around Rs 38 per kilometre—still competitively priced. For instance, a ride from Dabolim to Panjim would cost approximately Rs 1,068, while Panjim to Palolem would be Rs 2,173.

In another significant departure from prevailing

aggregator practices elsewhere, Goa's guidelines stipulate that payments must be cleared within 72 hours. Delays beyond this period will attract a 25% penalty on the pending amount.

The policy also encourages drivers to join multiple platforms, ensuring they remain autonomous and are not locked into a single operator. A welfare component has been integrated as well: registered drivers will receive Rs 10 lakh health insurance (increasing 5% annually), partial reimbursement of vehicle insurance, and added benefits for women drivers. Women will also receive a Rs 1 lakh subsidy for purchasing electric vehicles and extended insurance coverage for their families.

The initiative comes at a critical time. In 2024, Goa recorded over one crore tourist arrivals. But officials say the real transport demand lies within the local population, making the policy's inclusive design all the more important.

Road caves in at Conshem-Nirankal; locals demand urgent repairs

Team Herald

PONDA: A section of the main road at Conshem-Nirankal in the Bethora Nirankal Conshem Codar Panchayat has caved in following heavy rains, creating a serious hazard for motorists. A crater has also formed at the affected location, further endangering commuters.

The damaged stretch lies on a slope and a bend, increasing the risk of accidents, particularly for speeding vehicles. Locals have voiced strong concern and are calling on the authorities to undertake urgent repairs.

The road is a heavily used route connecting to Margao via Nirankal, Conshem, Paaz, and Shiroda. Residents described it as narrow, often making it difficult for two vehicles to pass each other safely.

According to locals, the road had previously been dug up for development and utility service works. How-



ever, they alleged that the contractor failed to properly restore the road surface after the completion of these works.

"The road was dug for development works and utility services; however,

after completion of work, the contractor failed to restore it properly," said a local resident.

Residents have also called for the road to be widened and hotmixed to ensure the safety of commuters.

Union Min inaugurates Sagar, Polar Bhavan

Team Herald

VASCO: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Earth Sciences, Dr Jitendra Singh, on Thursday inaugurated 'Sagar Bhavan' and 'Polar Bhavan' at the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) in Goa. These state-of-the-art facilities are the first of their kind in India and among a select few globally.

Dr Singh also unveiled a documentary tracing NCPOR's 25-year journey and took a virtual walk-through of the upcoming Polar and Ocean Museum. Additionally, he launched the "Science On Sphere (SOS)" initiative, a 3D visualisation platform for displaying earth systems and climate-related data.

Polar Bhavan, now the largest structure at the NCPOR campus, covers 11,378 square metres and was built at a cost of Rs 55 crore. It features laboratories dedicated to polar and ocean research, 55 rooms for scientific personnel, a conference room, seminar hall, library and canteen. The building also houses the newly launched SOS facility and will serve as the site of India's first Polar and Ocean Museum.

Sagar Bhavan, spanning 1,772 square metres and constructed at a cost of Rs 13 crore, includes two -30°C ice core laboratories and +4°C storage units for preserving sediment and biological samples. It also features 29 rooms, including a metal-free Class 1000 clean room for trace metal and isotope studies.

Sawant seeks national backing for khazan revival at NITI Aayog meet

Team Herald

PANJIM: Chief Minister Pramod Sawant called for urgent action and national support to revive Goa's historic Khazan lands at the 10th Governing Council Meeting of NITI Aayog in New Delhi on Saturday.

Highlighting that over 10,000 hectares of Khazan paddy lands have turned saline due to years of neglect, Sawant emphasised the necessity of large-scale maintenance of bunds, sluice gates and desilting operations.

"Government of Goa needs large-scale funding to take up these activities," he said. If restored, Goa's Khazan lands would regenerate thousands of hectares of cultivable land, improve livelihoods through agriculture, fishing and salt-making, and preserve coastal ecosystems for fu-

ture generations, he added. Sawant also presented Goa's "Viksit Goa" vision, with targets set for 2037 encompassing economic growth, social infrastructure and environmental sustainability. He noted that Goa's economy is currently growing at 9.17 per cent, with a per capita income 2.5 times higher than the national average.

The Chief Minister outlined the State's progress in green energy, stating that Goa aims to achieve 50 per cent renewable energy use and 30 per cent electric vehicle (EV) adoption by 2030. He also said that 50 per cent of houses are expected to be equipped with solar panels by 2030, a move that will not only reduce the State's power purchase costs but also generate employment in solar panel installation, repair and maintenance.

Speaking on the healthcare sector, Sawant pointed out that institutional deliveries in Goa are at 99.7 per cent. The State is striving to reduce its current infant mortality rate—10.73 deaths per 1,000 live births—to a single digit. He noted that Goa is the fifth State in the country to implement a dedicated State Palliative Care Policy and proposed that the country should have at least one hospital per district for the mentally challenged.

Later, Sawant participated in a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi. The meeting, centred around the theme "Viksit Rajya for Viksit Bharat @2047", brought together leaders from across the nation to discuss strategic roadmaps for achieving the transformative goal of a developed India by 2047, the Chief Minister added.

Kharge to attend Statehood Day celebrations on May 30

Team Herald

PANJIM: All India Congress Committee (AICC) President Mallikarjun Kharge will attend the Statehood Day programme organised by the party in Goa on May 30. This will be Kharge's maiden visit to the State after being elected as Congress President.

Goa Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) president Amit Patkar, along with Leader of the Opposition Yuri Alemao met Kharge in Bangalore and extended a formal invitation to him to attend the Goa Statehood Day celebrations.

Both the leaders also held a detailed discussion on the prevailing political scenario in the State. The mis-governance and anti-people policies of the BJP-led government were deliberated upon, along with the growing public dissatisfaction across the State, it was informed.

The roadmap for the 2027 Goa Assembly elections was discussed at length, focusing on strengthening the Congress organisation from the grassroots level and presenting a credible, people-centric alternative to the ruling BJP.

Smart safety devices by GEC students not meant for commercial use: Electricity Dept

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Electricity Department has clarified that two electrical safety devices—a smart helmet and a wristwatch—developed by engineering students were part of a college project and cannot be deployed for commercial use.

The students from Goa Engineering College (GEC), Farmagudi, had last year designed and developed a lineman's smart helmet

It was not a standard project and it cannot be used for commercial purposes. It was a students' project related to a college activity. I have already informed the college professor that it also requires modifications

— Mayur Hede, *superintending engineer*

that emits a beep to warn of live wires, along with a wristwatch intended to prevent electrocution. Jayesh Priolkar, Associate Professor in the Electrical Engineering department, along with his students, developed and successful-

ly tested the devices in the GEC laboratory under high voltage conditions and at a transformer. The equipment was demonstrated during the concluding session of a two-day training programme on Electrical Fire Safety Requirements

at the GEC campus in September last year.

Power Minister Ramakrishna 'Sudin' Dhavalikar had encouraged GEC students to create safety gadgets capable of detecting live wires and leakages, following the deaths of several linemen. He had stated that such innovations could help save lives.

After the recent tragic death of a lineman at Postwada, Honda, on Tuesday, there was renewed public discussion

on the smart helmet and wristwatch, with many questioning why the government had not adopted the devices.

However, when contacted, Superintending Engineer (Planning) Mayur Hede stated, "It was not a standard project and it cannot be used for commercial purposes. It was a students' project related to a college activity. I have already informed the college professor that it requires modifications."

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