

3 PANJIM BUILDINGS FACE DEMOLITION

Goa College of Engineering to conduct structural stability tests



CCP officials sealing some of the outlets in the municipal building seen below, on Monday

Team Herald

PANJIM: The fate of three prominent buildings in Panjim teeters on the edge as structural stability tests by the Goa College of Engineering could determine whether they stand or fall. The Lokmanya Building in Altinho, the mixed-use Sushila Building on 18 June Road, and the Mary Immaculate Building, which houses a school, are all under the scanner.

A senior engineer from the Corporation of the City of Panaji (CCP) confirmed that these buildings have been shortlisted for inspection. While complaints from



citizens triggered checks on the Sushila and Mary Immaculate buildings, no formal complaints were filed against the Lokmanya Building — though its precarious location on a slope raised red flags. The com-

plaintain in Sushila building's case was bothered by pieces falling on her house, according to CCP sources.

The CCP awaits the engineering college's report, which will decide whether any of these structures are

“This time, the authorities moved very fast. Earlier we'd get at least eight to fifteen days to respond. Now they gave us just 24 hours. That's not enough time to even move our goods or seek legal help. Everything is at a standstill. How can I — or anyone — move without alternative arrangements?”

— Pravin Pednekar, affected businessman

deemed unsafe. If found structurally compromised, the final call on demolition will be left to higher authorities.

In a related development, the CCP cracked down on a separate structure near the Panjim market on Monday. Following a structural audit that declared the municipal building adjacent to the Falcon building unsafe, 12 units within the complex were sealed with police support. The premises, owned by two landlords, were vacated with urgency.

But the action sparked immediate resistance.

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MONSOON MAYHEM



People make their way through a waterlogged road at Gandhi Market after heavy rains at Matunga in Mumbai, on Monday

CASH HAUL AT JUDGE'S HOUSE

SC rejects RTI plea for inquiry probe report

PTI, NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court administration has rejected a plea seeking a report of the apex court-appointed committee, which indicted Allahabad High Court judge Justice Yashwant Varma in the cash discovery row, under the Right to Information Act.

The RTI application had also sought the communication of the then Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna to President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the matter.

The apex court administration apparently referred to the confidentiality of the communication and rejected the RTI application on grounds that it may violate parliamentary privilege also.

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BRIBERY BOMBSHELL

Gaude's charge sparks storm, CM vows action

Minister's explosive claim on corruption in Tribal Welfare Dept has presented a political opportunity for the opposition which has demanded a probe

Team Herald

PANJIM: A day after Art and Culture Minister Govind Gaude publicly alleged corruption within the Department of Tribal Welfare, the controversy deepened on Monday with Chief Minister Pramod Sawant stating that the government had "taken note" of the minister's remarks and that appropriate action would be taken against him.

"We have taken note of his statement. Appropriate action will be initiated as early as possible," Sawant told reporters on his return from Delhi. Without naming Gaude directly, the Chief Minister said that irresponsible statements should not be

made, especially by those holding public office.

"A responsible minister should speak responsibly. There are proper channels to address grievances," he added.

On Sunday, Gaude, while speaking at the Prerna Din event in Ponda, had claimed that contractors dealing with the Tribal Welfare Department — located at Shrama Shakti Bhavan, Patto — were being asked to pay bribes before their files were processed.

"The administration has weakened. 'Something' is taken from contractors, and only then are they told to submit their files," Gaude had said.

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— Pramod Sawant, Chief Minister

“This is not a revelation, but a sign of utter frustration with his own government. Since the corruption he mentioned falls under the Chief Minister's portfolio, Goa is now waiting to see whether @Dr Pramod P Sawant takes any stern action — or whether this cabinet will proudly retain its title as the most corrupt government Goa has ever seen”

— Vijai Sardesai, Fatorda MLA

' Hamas agrees to Gaza ceasefire proposal'

AGENCY, GAZA CITY: A Hamas source said the group had accepted a Gaza ceasefire proposal presented by mediators that reportedly involves the releasing of 10 hostages in two batches and a 70-day truce.

The outline of the new potential deal was revealed as Israel ramped up its offensive in the Palestinian territory, and follows previous rounds of talks that have failed to reach a breakthrough ever since a two-month ceasefire fell apart in mid-March.

"Hamas has agreed to the new proposal by US envoy Steve Witkoff, which the movement received from mediators," the Hamas source told AFP.

The deal, they added, included "a 70-day truce in exchange for the release of 10 hostages, and during the truce, negotiations would begin on a permanent ceasefire with American guarantees".

Witkoff, was involved in the negotiations that led to the last ceasefire deal. Another Palestinian source said the new proposal laid out "the release of 10 living Israeli hostages held by Hamas in exchange for a 70-day truce, a partial (Israeli) withdrawal from the Gaza Strip (and) the release of a number of Palestinian prisoners".

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Stop-work order halts Odxel project

Developer under scrutiny as locals raise alarm over excavation risks and monsoon-triggered mudslide

Team Herald

PANJIM: The North Goa flying squad has issued a stop-work order against the controversial construction project at Odxel, Taleigao, after a mudslide last week endangered nearby homes and forced evacuations. This comes even as the developer submitted documents to the North Goa Planning and Development Authority (NGPDA) in an attempt to defend the project's legality.

On Monday, the developer provided paperwork including a copy of permission granted under Section 17(A) of the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Act — approval reportedly dating back to 2008, despite the project being located on a steep hillside.

NGPDA Member Secretary Ashok Kumar confirmed the submission: "The developer has submitted his documents, including the 17(A) permission. We will now scrutinise

them, and submit our findings along with the inspection report to the North Goa Collector."

The NGPDA inspected the site last Friday, days after a May 20 mudslide sent mud and debris sliding between homes and into at least one house during heavy rains. Three families were evacuated as a safety measure.

The incident also ignited political tensions, culminating in AAP leader Cecille Rodrigues filing a police complaint against Taleigao MLA Jennifer Monserrate, panchayat member Sidney Barreto, and builders Sadique Shaikh and Mudhit Gupta, alleging assault during a confrontation at the site.

Rodrigues and fellow resident Francis Coelho also filed a formal complaint with the Goa State Disaster Management Authority (GSDMA).

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Brij Bhushan POCSO case closed

Delhi court accepts police closure report against ex-WFI chief

PTI, NEW DELHI: A court here on Monday accepted a closure report of the Delhi Police, seeking to cancel a case filed by a wrestler accusing former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh of sexual harassment when she was a minor.



Gonti Manocha said.

During an in-chamber proceeding held on August 1, 2023, the "minor" had told the judge that she was satisfied with Delhi Police's investigation.

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Invasive species cost trillions in damages: Study

AFP, PARIS: From river-clogging plants to disease-carrying insects, the direct economic cost of invasive species worldwide has averaged about \$35 billion a year for decades, researchers said Monday.

Since 1960, damage from non-native plants and animals expanding into new territory has cost society more than \$2.2 trillion, 17 times higher than previous estimates, they reported in the journal Nature Ecology & Evolution.

The accelerating spread of invasive species — from mosquitoes to wild boar to tough-to-eradicate plants — blights agriculture, spreads disease and drives the growing pace of species extinction.

Earlier calculations based on highly incomplete data were already known to fall far short of reality.

To piece together a more accurate picture, an international team of researchers led by Ismael Soto, a scientist at the University of South Bohemia in the Czech Republic, compiled data on 162 invasive species whose costs have been well documented in at least a handful of countries.

They then modelled the economic impact for 78

MEGA DAMAGE

• \$35 billion/year is the average annual direct economic cost of invasive species globally

• \$2.2 trillion is the total since 1960, 17 times higher than previous estimates

• 162 species studied

• Invasive plants caused the most economic damage, especially in urban and coastal areas

• Europe is the hardest-hit continent, followed by North America and Asia

other countries such as Bangladesh and Costa Rica, for which no data was previously available.

"We expected an underestimation of invasion costs, but the magnitude was striking," Soto told AFP. Due mainly to high volumes of trade and travel, tens of thousands of animal and plant species have taken root, sometimes literally, far from their places of origin.

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MAX. TEMP 29.4 °C
MIN. TEMP 23.8 °C

idharudhar



You're too late — the whole road's already been dug up!

Farmers left to fend for themselves after unseasonal rains flood S Goa paddy fields

Team Herald

MARGAO: An unexpected spell of heavy pre-monsoon rain at the end of May has wreaked havoc across South Goa's paddy fields, causing severe losses for farmers in several talukas. Villages like Velim, Assolda, Chandor, Sanguem, Quepem, and Canacona have been among the worst affected.

In Velim, local farmer Guirdolina Fernandes reported losses exceeding Rs 28,000 across two fields, even before the planting season could begin. Despite multiple re-



Guirdolina, a farmer from Velim, stands in her field inundated by the rains

minders to the authorities and panchayat about the urgent need for bund repairs before the rains, no

action was taken, she said. Her elderly mother, who still works in the fields, was heartbroken by the

destruction. The agriculture department has made promises of assistance, but little has materialised.

Farmers in Assolda-Chandor who had opted for early sowing to avoid the June monsoon found themselves unprepared for premature rainfall. Xavier Fernandes, who farms with his uncle Rosario, estimated their losses at Rs 50,000 to Rs 60,000. According to Xavier, premature rainfall damages mature rice grains by causing sprouting, discolouration and a severe drop in yield — a nightmare for any farmer. Others in the area are fac-

ing similar losses.

The widespread nature of the problem has prompted the agriculture department to begin special surveys to assess the scale of damage across South Goa. According to department sources, areas in Sanguem, Quepem and Canacona talukas were among the worst affected, with around 10 hectares of farmland submerged. Officials have warned that prolonged rain could cause irreversible crop damage, increasing the financial burden on cultivators.

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