

# Tribal alliance defends Gaude, says remarks 'misinterpreted'

Prominent tribal leaders claim the minister did not criticise CM Sawant or allege graft, but only expressed frustration at non-performing officials delaying developmental projects

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** The United Tribal Association Alliance (UTAA) has come out in strong support of Art and Culture Minister Govind Gaude, asserting that his recent remarks regarding the Tribal Welfare Department were misinterpreted and not aimed at Chief Minister Pramod Sawant or the state government.

Speaking at a press conference, UTAA President Prakash Velip claimed that Minister Gaude merely 'expressed frustration' over the inefficiency of officers and staff in the Tribal Welfare Department.

"Gaude did not criticise the Chief Minister or the government. His concerns were directed at non-performing officials who are failing to implement welfare initiatives," Velip said.

Velip emphasised that Gaude, known for his commitment to the tribal com-

## 'RESOLVE ISSUES IN ASSEMBLY, NOT IN PUBLIC'

Team Herald

**PONDA:** The Scheduled Tribe (ST) wing of the Revolutionary Goans Party (RGP) held a press briefing in Ponda on Friday, urging tribal leaders to address welfare issues in the Legislative Assembly instead of airing grievances in public. Geetesh Gaonkar from Sanguem highlighted the ongoing dispute between Minister Govind Gaude and Speaker Ramesh Tawadkar. "If there is no unity among tribal leaders, how will they ensure the development of the tribal community?" he questioned.

"Some mud houses are on the verge of collapse because these schemes have not reached the people," he said. "If Ramesh and Govind continue blaming each other, who will take responsibility for resolving our issues? Their personal conflicts should not come at the cost of tribal welfare."

Premanand Gaude, another RGP functionary, added that corruption has occurred within the Tribal Welfare Department, Minister Govind Gaude should file a complaint with the CBI or Vigilance Department instead of speaking at public events.

community, spoke out of genuine concern for the delays in executing developmental

projects, particularly the ongoing work on the tribal building.

Despite repeated instructions from the Chief Minister, Gaude highlighted that the department's functioning remains sluggish.

Reacting to speculation about corruption in the approval of files at Shram Shakti Bhavan, Velip clarified that Gaude never alleged financial misconduct. "It has not been said anywhere that he accused anyone of taking money. Any claims made should be verified, but there is no mention of bribery," he stated.

The UTAA also questioned the current administrative structure, suggesting that the Tribal Welfare Department should be managed by a dedicated minister rather than the Chief Minister himself.

"The sentiments of the tribal community have been conveyed to the Chief Minister," Velip said.

Echoing these sentiments, UTAA Executive President Vishwas Gawde defended

the minister, asserting that Gaude has always worked in the interest of the community and that the organisation stands firmly behind him. He added that Gaude, currently out of state, will present his side upon returning.

BJP State President Damu Naik and MP Sadanand Shet Tanavade also reportedly met with tribal leaders and confirmed that Minister Gaude had not made any defamatory or inappropriate remarks. The Chief Minister has assured UTAA representatives that their concerns will be considered.

When asked about the possibility of action against Gaude, Vishwas Gawde stated that the organisation would convene and decide its next steps after hearing all sides.

The UTAA maintained that demands for action against Gaude are unjustified and called for a fair assessment of the situation before any decision is made.

# GFP decries NH plan, claims temples at risk

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** The Goa Forward Party on Tuesday reiterated its demand for realignment to save historic temples after a delegation of Bhoma villagers, affected by the expansion of National Highway 4A, met party President and MLA Vijai Sardesai to seek his support for their demand to realign the highway in order to protect their centuries-old temples.

After meeting the delegation, Sardesai accused the BJP government in Goa of being on a mission to destroy the State's temple heritage.

"After destroying a temple in Porvorim, the government now plans to demolish the historic Sateri and Mahadev temples in Bhoma, which are in the path of the NH4A expansion," Sardesai said.

Sardesai highlighted that he had personally convinced Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari to explore an alternative alignment that would protect the temples, but

**Why are Ministers deciding temple boundaries? These temples belong to the Bahujan Samaj. Why is the BJP targeting these places of worship? Do they believe themselves to be above our deities? — Vijai Sardesai, Fatorda MLA**

the State government has failed to act on this. "We are trying to safeguard the 500-year-old cultural and spiritual heritage of these temples, but the government seems determined to hurt people's sentiments instead," he added.

"I had kept quiet recently because I had hope in Union Minister Gadkari's approach, which was more sensitive and reasonable. But the State government has now chosen a path of confrontation, ignoring both public sentiment and practical alternatives," he clarified.

According to the villagers, Ministers are now dictating how much of the temple should remain

untouched. Sardesai raised serious concerns about this interference. "Why are Ministers deciding temple boundaries? Is it because they own land near the highway and want to profit from real estate?"

"These temples belong to the Bahujan Samaj. Why is the BJP targeting these places of worship? Do they believe themselves to be above our deities?" he questioned.

Sardesai also drew attention to recent flood-like situations in Goa due to poor planning and infrastructure. "While the BJP is busy organising Melavas, they should be addressing real issues affecting Goans," he said.

He appealed to the government to stop politicising the issue and reconsider the alignment. "The current plan will divide the village and cost more in the long run. A revised alignment would be cheaper, shorter, and in the true interest of the people. I will follow up and ensure this matter is not forgotten," Sardesai concluded.

# Taxi policy mooted sans consultation, clarity: Vijai

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** A delegation of Goa's traditional taxi operators visited Fatorda MLA and Goa Forward Party President, Vijai Sardesai, to express their strong grievances regarding the recently notified Goa Transport Aggregator Guidelines 2025, which were published in the Official Gazette on May 20.

After giving the operators a patient hearing, Vijai Sardesai voiced serious concern over the manner in which these guidelines were introduced without consulting key stakeholders. He reminded that during the last session of the Goa Legislative Assembly, there was a clear consensus that any major policy shift or regulatory change concerning the taxi business would involve stakeholder consultations. "This assurance given in the House has clearly been violated," he said.

"The government earlier brought in meters, speed governors, GPS tracking devices — all of which failed. Only the suppliers of these devices and certain ministers profited. Are these new guidelines also aimed at benefiting ministers?"

He raised an important question on the unregulated entry of aggregators into Goa, stating, "There is no clarity on how many cab aggregators will be allowed. Aggregators from across India can now enter Goa. Is this the model of tourism we want?"

Highlighting the core of Goa's identity and its tourism appeal, Sardesai asserted, "Tourists come to Goa for its unique identity and Goan hospitality. If tourism is handed over to outsiders, what remains of our identity? Traditional Goan taxi drivers — sons of the soil — know Goa best and must be the first beneficiaries of Goa's tourism economy."

However, he also cautioned that tourism services must remain affordable and competitive. "The cost of tourism services cannot become so inflated that tourists stop coming to Goa. We must strike a balance."

Sardesai affirmed that the Goa Forward Party will study the published guidelines in detail and submit formal objections and suggestions in the interest of protecting Goan livelihoods.

# COLLISION COURSE



Traditional taxi drivers meet Fatorda MLA Vijai Sardesai at his office on Tuesday, to voice their objections to the Goa Transport Aggregator Guidelines 2025

# With no sarpanch or deputy, govt appoints official to oversee Raia p'yat

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** The Raia panchayat will temporarily be administered by a government-appointed official following the simultaneous vacancy of both the Sarpanch and Deputy Sarpanch posts.

The Directorate of Panchayats, under the direction of Siddhi Halarnakar, has appointed Dhaklu Ghadi as the interim administrator to oversee the functioning of the panchayat.

This decision comes in the wake of a successful no-confidence motion moved by a group of six panchayat members against Deputy Sarpanch Oswald D'Souza. The motion was passed recently, resulting in his removal from of-

**Deputy Sarpanch Oswald D'Souza was recently ousted by a no-trust motion while Sarpanch Mario D'Souza tendered his resignation, leaving both top leadership positions vacant**

fice. Around the same time, Sarpanch Mario D'Souza tendered his resignation, leaving both top leadership positions vacant. With no immediate replacements available, the Directorate stepped in to ensure continuity in governance and essential services.

According to the official order, the appointed administrator will carry out the responsibilities of the panchayat twice a week.

This temporary arrangement is aimed at maintaining basic ad-

ministrative functions until new leadership is in place. The role of the administrator includes supervising ongoing panchayat affairs, ensuring service delivery, and providing stability in the absence of elected heads.

Meanwhile, the Directorate has announced that elections to appoint a new Deputy Sarpanch will be conducted on June 2. However, no date has yet been announced for the election or selection of a new Sarpanch.

# Stick to traditional sowing schedule, agriculture department tells farmers

Early rains may mislead, but premature sowing could hurt yield, warns director

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Despite the early arrival of the monsoon and persistent pre-monsoon showers across Goa, the Department of Agriculture has advised farmers to adhere to their traditional paddy sowing timelines. Director of Agriculture, Sandeep Fal Dessai, emphasized that deviating from established schedules could negatively impact crop health and yield.

While the recent rainfall has facilitated initial field activities, Dessai cautioned against interpreting the moisture as a signal to commence sowing. "It's crucial for farmers to resist the urge to sow prematurely," he stated, while speaking to the media.

"Hastening cultivation may lead to unforeseen consequences affecting the paddy's growth cycle."

Observations from Salcete taluka indicate that some cultivators in areas like Nuvem and parts of Curtorim have already begun planting. However, Dessai highlighted that experienced farmers typically follow their traditional schedules, which have consistently resulted in better outcomes. "Although the showers assist in field preparation,



**Over 50 hectares of paddy crop already damaged in parts of South Goa; farmers in Curchorem report devastating losses after heavy rainfall, combined with the unannounced opening of Nanda Lake gates left their crops submerged**

the success of the harvest largely depends on adhering to the appropriate timeline," he explained.

Currently, approximately 31,000 hectares across Goa are under paddy cultivation, with the area occasionally expanding to 36,000 hectares depending on seasonal conditions. However, this year's pre-monsoon downpour has already inflicted some damage. According to Dessai, over 50 hectares of paddy fields in Sanguem and Dharbandora have been adversely affected due to excessive

rainfall.

The caution from the Agriculture Department comes amid widespread damage caused by unseasonal May showers. Farmers in parts of South Goa, including Vellim and Assolda-Chandor, have suffered heavy losses due to flooding and early crop damage. The Agriculture Department continues to monitor weather patterns and field conditions closely, encouraging farmers to rely on traditional knowledge and established farming calendars to ensure optimal yields.

MAX. TEMP 29 °C  
MIN. TEMP 23 °C

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Thanks, now I need another loan just to move the file!

# Tiatrists aghast as Ravindra Bhavan to stay closed until June 15

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** The tiatr community has expressed deep disappointment and frustration over the continued closure of the Pai Tiatr Hall at Ravindra Bhavan, Margao (RBM), following another extension of the shutdown — now until June 15.

The auditorium has been closed for several weeks due to ongoing repair and waterproofing work, but tiatrists claim the repeated delays are causing them severe hardship.

This marks the fourth time the reopening has been pushed back, leaving many directors and performers in distress, especially after making financial and logistical preparations for shows scheduled in early June.

A group of tiatrists held meeting with RBM Chairman Rajen-



dra Talak to voice their concerns and request that the hall be made available for performances at least during June, suggesting that repair work resume from September. However, the request was reportedly denied.

Veteran tiatr director Sammy Tavares expressed doubt over the intentions behind the continuous postponements.

"This is the fourth extension. It's raising serious questions — is this being done deliberately? We are not against repair work, but a more practical timeline could have been followed," he said.

Tavares added that the fraternity had proposed a workable compromise that would allow shows to go on while repairs continue during the monsoon months when perfor-

**We invested in promotions and ticket printing, expecting to perform in early June. Now we're told the hall will remain shut. This is a financial and emotional blow to all of us — Anita, tiatr director**

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mances are fewer. "Our suggestion was ignored," he added.

Tiatr director Anita, whose production 'Smile Please' has been receiving a strong response from audiences, also voiced her disappointment.

"We invested in promotions and

ticket printing, expecting to perform in early June. Now we're told the hall will remain shut. This is a financial and emotional blow to all of us," she said.

Other tiatrists, including Sebe de Divar, Constantinho Crasto, and Richard Colaco, shared similar frustrations, noting that the closure has left them with no alternative venues to stage their new plays. With performance calendars disrupted and audiences disappointed, many in the community feel the situation could have been handled with better planning and communication.

The ongoing closure has dealt a significant setback to the vibrant tiatr scene in South Goa, which relies heavily on RBM's Pai Tiatr Hall as a key venue. The fraternity is now urging the authorities to reconsider their stance and find a more balanced solution.