

Hill cutting stokes uproar at Mala

Mayor rushes to site, stops work as residents voice concerns about environmental degradation

Team Herald

PANJIM: A hill-cutting activity near Marutigad in Mala, Panjim, has raised public outcry, prompting the Corporation of the City of Panaji (CCP) Mayor Rohit Monserrate and local residents to visit the site on Friday.

The individuals behind the illegal activity reportedly aimed to create easier access to the main road from their residence, constructing a makeshift pathway on government property. Residents voiced serious concerns about the environmental consequences and safety risks associated with the excavation.

Upon receiving the information, Mayor Rohit Monserrate, Deputy Mayor Sanjeev Naik, and ward councillor Aditi Chopdekar rushed to the location.



Monserrate stated that the landowner was illegally carrying out land-filling on property belonging to the Government of India. "The CCP had previously issued a show cause notice and a stop-work or-

der to the owner, both of which were ignored," said Monserrate. The Mayor immediately instructed CCP staff to verify whether illegalities had been committed and whether the previous orders had

been defied.

"They can do such activities elsewhere, but not in Panjim. People will not tolerate it. The CCP will also follow its procedure," Monserrate said.

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Rohit Monserrate, CCP mayor

"The landowner had originally sought permission for renovation but they were now engaged in land-filling to create easier access to the main road"

Aditi Chopdekar, ward councillor

Councillor Chopdekar noted that while "the landowner had originally sought permission for renovation but they were now engaged in land-filling to create easier access to the main road".

Ankit Yadav is N Goa Collector

Team Herald

PANJIM: Ankit Yadav, IAS, has been appointed as the North Goa Collector with immediate effect. Yadav was previously serving as the Managing Director of the Goa Waste Management Corporation.

Director of Fisheries Yashaswini B had been holding additional charge as North Goa District Magistrate since May 3.

In another order, Secretary Prasanna Acharya has been allocated the portfolios of Fisheries, Empowerment of PwDs, Provedoria, and Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services. Secretary Sarpreet Singh Gill, IAS, has been assigned the Water Resources, Social Welfare, Planning and Statistics departments, and the roles of Commissioner

of Excise and State Taxes. Additionally, Commissioner Sandip Jacques has been directed to take charge as Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Limited, in addition to his current responsibilities, with immediate effect.

Meanwhile Dnyaneshwar Salelkar will assume additional charge as Chief Engineer (Water Resources) following the retirement of Pramod Badami on May 31. Salelkar is currently posted as Additional Chief Engineer, Irrigation Project, in the Water Resources Department.

Badami, who was granted four extensions beyond his original retirement date, received his latest six-month extension from December 1, 2024 to May 31, 2025.

Parab is AAP gen secy

Team Herald

PANJIM: In a bid to strengthen its grassroots presence in Goa, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has inducted Srikrishna Parab into the party and appointed him as AAP Goa's General Secretary (Organ-

isation).

State president Adv Amit Palekar used the occasion to unveil AAP's "Mission 2027" and "Vision 2027" for Goa, centred on clean governance, quality healthcare and education, employment generation, and corruption-free development.

13 bouncers chargesheeted in Assagao house demolition case, Pooja let off

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Special Investigation Team (SIT) has filed chargesheet against 13 persons in the Assagao house demolition reported in June last year but has excluded land owner Pooja Sharma who was accused to be the "mastermind" from any charges due to lack of evidence.

The incident had resulted in the transfer of the then DGP Jaspal Singh and suspension of three policemen

including the then Anjuna PSI Prashal Dessai.

The SIT of Crime branch filed the chargesheet on May 27 this year and the matter has been posted for the first hearing before the 2-Adhoc Civil Judge, Senior Division and JMFC, Mapusa, on June 17.

The chargesheet has been filed against Arshad Khwaja, Ashfaq Shaikh, Azim Shaikh, Mohammad Imran Salmani, Bismilla Gorgundagi, Shalon Morekar, Shaheen Saudagar, Rohit Bobate, Javed Shaikh, Zayed

Mulla, Prachalesh Naik, Mohammed Hanif, Hajarat Sab Shaikh and Rubina Abdulhasan Shaikh. Most of the accused were bouncers.

As many as 15 bouncers had descended at Prinsha Agarwadekar's residence at Assagao on June 22, 2024, and asked them to vacate. The bouncers told the occupants that they had come to demolish the house as they had got their land from Chrys Pinto. The muscle men then covered their faces and left, but later arrived with a earthmover to raze the house.

ROAD RELIEF



After O Herald published a photograph of potholes on the Chogm Road on May 26, authorities began repair work by placing pavers on the damaged stretch

Speaker Tawadkar non-committal on Cabinet reshuffle

Says all departmental work on track

Team Herald

MARGAO: Amid growing speculation of a cabinet reshuffle in Goa, Assembly Speaker Ramesh Tawadkar has chosen to remain non-committal on the issue, stating that any decision regarding changes in the cabinet lies solely with the Chief Minister and the ruling party.

Speaking to the media, Tawadkar said, "It is for the Chief Minister and the party leadership to decide. I have no comments on the matter." His statement comes at a time when political circles are abuzz with rumours of possible changes in ministerial portfolios.

Tawadkar also addressed concerns regarding the functioning of departments previously under his charge, particularly the Tribal Welfare Department. He maintained that none of his projects or departmental responsibilities are pending.

"All work has been carried out efficiently. Regular follow-ups with officials have ensured that there are no delays," he said.

When asked about the recent statements made by Art and Culture Minister Govind Gaude at a

"As Speaker, I have fulfilled all my responsibilities. I am satisfied with the role I've been entrusted with and continue to work in accordance with constitutional provisions"

Ramesh Tawadkar, Speaker

United Tribal Associations Alliance (UTAA) function, Tawadkar declined to comment. Gaude's remarks have drawn attention in political circles, but the Speaker chose to distance himself from the controversy.

"As Speaker, I have fulfilled all my responsibilities. I am satisfied with the role I've been entrusted with and continue to work in accordance with constitutional provisions," Tawadkar added.

His guarded comments suggest a cautious approach amid the fluid political situation in the state. While refraining from direct involvement in cabinet-related discussions or political controversies, Tawadkar made it clear that his focus remains on administrative efficiency and the duties of his current office.

Kerala youth with hydroponic weed, LSD lands in ANC net

Team Herald

SIOLIM: In a major anti-narcotics operation, the Anti-Narcotic Cell (ANC) arrested Alwin Thomachan, 29, from Kerala at Siolim for possession of hydroponic cannabis and LSD blot papers, with an estimated street value of Rs 22 lakh in the international market.

The arrest followed weeks of technical surveillance and intelligence gathering by Anti-Narcotic Cell sleuths. The

accused was nabbed on Thursday night while in possession of the contraband substances.

He was produced before the Magistrate and remanded to five days in police custody.

The operation was led by PSI Dindyal Redkar along with his team, under the supervision of PI Sajith Pillai.

The raid was carried out under the close direction of DySP ANC Nerlon Albuquerque and SP ANC Sunita Sawant.

Sodiem-Siolim villagers oppose proposed 25-metre road

Team Herald

SIOLIM: The Sodiem-Sodiem Village Development Committee (VDC), Village Biodiversity Management Committee (BMC) have strongly opposed the proposed 25-metre-wide Major District Road (MDR) through their village, warning of a serious agitation if the government proceeds with the plan.

Temper flared at the joint meeting of the VDC and BMC, convened by the Siodim-Sodiem panchayat, where the members unanimously condemned the proposal and asked the panchayat to stop playing to Centre's destructive projects and demanded that they stand for village welfare and posterity.

VDC Chairperson Mohit Chodankar accused the local panchayat and State government of aligning with the Centre's alleged strategy of systematically destroy-

ing Goan villages. "These proposed projects are detrimental to the interests, livelihood and survival of locals," he said.

BMC Chairperson stressed that a 25-metre road in a village like Sodiem was unnecessary and would result in the demolition of homes, temples, and other places of worship. "If people are evicted from the village, for whom are such wide roads being built?" he questioned.

He also condemned the panchayat for remaining a "mute spectator" to what he described as "monstrous plans" and demanded a response from the body.

In response, Sarpanch Deepa Pednekar and panch member Nishan Kalangutkar pledged full support to the villagers' cause, stating they were even willing to resign from their posts if necessary.

Sensing frayed tempers, all seven panchas unanimously demanded that the panchayat oppose the road project outright and support a people's agitation, including road blockades akin to the Bhoma protest. They stressed that the panchayat must convey the people's voice to higher authorities and take a firm stand.

The Chairperson pointed to the earlier Tillari project, which he said had already destroyed Sodiem's hills and farms.

Deputy Sarpanch Nilesh Vaingankar also opposed the plan, suggesting that if the government was so intent on building the road, it should look for an alternative route that does not run through residential areas. "What is the logic behind such a wide road in a small village? It will lead to the destruction of our homes and erase the identity of the village," he added.

Cong blasts govt over power, water crisis in Porvorim

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Goa Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) has come down heavily on the BJP-led State government for what it termed a "complete administrative failure" after residents of Pundalik Nagar in Porvorim were left without electricity and water for over 12 hours on Thursday.

GPCC Media Department Chairman Amarnath Panjikar condemned the government's handling of the situation, calling it a reflection of "Stone Age governance." He said, "It is disgraceful that in 2025, residents of Por-

vorim—just minutes from the capital—are forced to suffer without water and electricity for over half a day. The BJP government is quick to make tall claims of development, but where is the basic infrastructure? Where is the accountability?"

Power supply, initially expected to be restored by 9 am on Friday, was delayed further with officials later shifting the timeline to 3 pm. Electricity was eventually restored around 1 pm. According to the Electricity Department, the disruption was due to transformer damage.

Panjikar slammed the department's "casual atti-

tude" and the lack of contingency planning. "This incident has exposed the sheer lack of preparedness of the government," he said.

The Congress party demanded the immediate restoration of power and water services in the affected area, a detailed investigation into the repeated transformer failures, and improved maintenance protocols. It also called on the government to issue a public apology to residents for the inconvenience caused.

"Residents deserve better than broken promises, shifting deadlines, and administrative negligence," Panjikar added.

Devotional singer Kadkade to receive Gomant Vibhushan Award

Team Herald

PANJIM: Renowned devotional singer Pandit Ajit Kumar Kadkade has been chosen to receive the Gomant Vibhushan Award, the highest civilian honour of the State.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant made the announcement during the 39th Goa Statehood Day celebrations held at Dinanath Mangeshkar Kala Mandir, Campal-Panjim, on Friday.

The Gomant Vibhushan Award is conferred upon individuals of Goan origin who have made outstanding contributions in their respective fields. Pandit Kadkade will be the ninth recipient of this prestigious honour.

Previous recipients include scientist Anil Kakodkar (2009-10), architect Charles Correa (2011), scientist Raghunath Mashelkar (2012-13), freedom fighter and journalist Lambert Mascarenhas (2014), artist Laxman Pai (2016), neurosurgeon Dr Premanand Ramani (2018), folk artiste Vinayak Khedekar (2019-20), and classical singer Prabhakhar Karekar (2021-22).

Goa achieves 100% literacy milestone on 39th Statehood Day

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Union Ministry of Education has declared Goa a fully literate State under the ULLAS Bharat Literacy Programme.

The announcement was made during the Statehood Day celebrations held at Kala Academy, Panjim, on Friday. With an impressive literacy rate of 99.72%, Goa now joins Meghalaya and Ladakh among the few States and Union Territories to achieve 100% literacy under the ULLAS programme.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant stated, "Our sustained collective efforts to strengthen the education sector with new advancements and the NEP 2020 have yielded results."

Of the 6,299 individuals identified as illiterate, 2,136 were trained and cleared the literacy programme, while 4,163 could not complete it due to age

or medical conditions. Notably, 82 village panchayats achieved 100% literacy, and others surpassed the national benchmark of 95%. The definition of literacy now also includes digital and financial literacy.

Archana Awasthi, IRS, Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Education, called the achievement a "historic milestone" and said it reflects Goa's long-standing commitment to inclusive development and education, serving as a model for the rest of the country.

On the State's broader developmental progress, the Chief Minister said that 80% of the 13 flagship programmes have already been fully implemented, with the remaining to be completed soon.

Sawant paid tribute to freedom fighters and those who contributed to Goa's development, highlighting the importance of events like the Opinion Poll and

the language agitation in shaping Goa's identity.

He also praised the iconic Goan brands felicitated during the function, noting that their legacy continues through the next generation.

Director of SCERT, Meghana Shetgaonkar, was felicitated by the Chief Minister for her contribution to education in the State.

Five government departments were recognised for best practices in governance. The Swayampurna Village Panchayat of Taleigao (Tiswadi, North Goa) and Bandora (Ponda, South Goa) were also felicitated.

Dilesh Anand Gauns Dessai, Chief Forest Surveyor/Engineer of the Forest Department, and Thanu Narayan Zalmi, Statistical Officer, Directorate of Social Welfare, were honoured as Swayampurna Mitras for Taleigao and Bandora panchayats, respectively.

Margao marks celebration with patriotic tribute, student felicitation

Team Herald

MARGAO: The 39th Goa Statehood Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm at Ravindra Bhavan, Margao, under the banner of Model Margao—an initiative led by Yogiraj Digambar Kamat. The event highlighted Goa's rich legacy, youth excellence, and patriotic spirit.

The celebration opened with a powerful patriotic performance by the Akshay Anvekar Dance Academy (AADA). The act, themed around the recent Pahalgaon attack and Operation Sindoor, depicted national resilience and sacrifice. Specially curated by Model Margao, the per-

formance left a strong emotional impact and was widely appreciated by the audience as a fitting tribute on this significant day.

Yogiraj Kamat, the event host, welcomed all dignitaries and attendees, reaffirming Model Margao's commitment to promoting youth development, education, and community engagement.

A key highlight of the program was the felicitation of 85 meritorious students from nearly 20 schools (Goa Board, CBSE, and ICSE) in the Margao constituency. These students were honoured for their exceptional performance in the SSC Examination 2025, showcasing the academic talent and potential of Goa's youth.

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