

LUXURY CRUISE BOAT GUTTED IN PRE-DAWN BLAZE OFF MALIM

Owner suspects foul play as Rs 1 cr vessel used for weddings, shoots reduced to charred wreck

Team Herald

PANJIM: A luxury 60-seater boat, MV Kayat Panjim 734, was completely destroyed in a fierce fire in the early hours of Saturday near the Malim jetty. The blaze, which reportedly broke out between 4:45 am and 5 am, consumed the vessel used primarily for pre-wedding events and photo shoots.

The boat belonged to George Thomson Silveira, who said some of his staff were present in the vicinity when the fire began. Silveira stated that the vessel had completed its final charter on Friday evening between 6 and 7:45 pm, carrying two couples and eight chil-

“There’s a lot of jealousy in Goa. It’s hard to believe a fire could just start on its own. The engines were off, and the lights—connected to the generator—were off too —George Thomson Silveira, Owner

dren. After the guests disembarked, staff cleaned the vessel and Silveira left, insisting there had been nothing unusual at the time. “I got a call between 5:10 and 5:15 am,” Silveira said. “I immediately informed the police, who then deployed the fire brigade.” Silveira described how the fire spread so quickly



and fiercely that the mooring ropes were burnt through, causing the vessel to drift towards Panjim with the low tide. “I followed the boat from the shore, but the heat and flames made it impossible to get close,” he said. The Panjim Fire Station was contacted at 5:55 am. A

fire tender was dispatched and stationed near the Captain of Ports jetty. Sandeep Naik from the Porvorim Fire Brigade, who assisted at the scene, said, “We used a hose from the Captain of Ports jetty and managed to bring the fire under control within half an hour.”



Thankfully, no injuries were reported. Rupesh Sawant, Officer-in-Charge at the Panjim Fire Station, said no clear cause of the fire was established during the initial inspection. “Now, it’s up to the police to determine the origin of the fire,” he added.

A visibly shaken Silveira expressed deep sorrow over the loss. “Looking at the state of the boat is heartbreaking,” he said. When asked what could have caused the fire, he hinted at possible sabotage. “There’s a lot of jealousy in Goa. It’s hard to believe a

fire could just start on its own. The engines were off, and the lights—connected to the generator—were off too,” he remarked.

Silveira estimated the loss to be over Rs 1 crore. “My wife and I kept building this up bit by bit. All the documentation and tourism certificates are in place. I really don’t know what to say,” he added.

The charred remains of the vessel have been moved to the Narvekar Boat Jetty. Sandeep Naik confirmed that a report on the incident has been prepared and a formal letter will be sent to the police on Monday to initiate an official investigation.

Husband murders wife with stone after heated argument

Team Herald

PONDA: In a chilling incident at Shirvada-Shiroda, 34-year-old Chetan Ratnakar Gaonkar allegedly murdered his wife Hema Chetan Gaonkar (31) by bludgeoning her with a stone following a heated argument on Saturday evening. The incident occurred around 5 pm, after which the accused surrendered himself at the Shiroda Police outpost.

Shocking incident in Shiroda leaves three-year-old son orphaned; police launch probe into motive

Upon receiving the information, Ponda Police Inspector Vijaykumar Kavlekar rushed to the scene and conducted the panchanama. A forensic team was called to assist, and the deceased’s body was sent for post-mortem examination.

The accused, Chetan Gaonkar, is employed as a peon at the Ponda Deputy Collector’s Office, while the deceased was a primary teacher at a private school in Farmagudi. The couple, married for four years, have a three-year-old son and had recently constructed a new house in Shiroda.

Police sources indicated that the couple had been facing marital discord for some time. “There were frequent fights between them, and the situation had reportedly escalated to the point where divorce was being considered,” an officer said.

Speaking to the media, Ponda DySP Shivram Vaigankar stated, “As per preliminary inquiry, the couple had been in constant conflict since their marriage four years ago. Today, they had another heated argument, after which the husband brought a stone inside the house and used it to murder his wife.”

Police have registered an offence and are continuing their investigation to determine the exact motive behind the crime.

Coastal ecosystems under threat, draft biodiversity plan warns

Team Herald

PANJIM: Goa State Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (GSBSAP) has raised serious concerns about the increasing threats facing the state’s mangrove ecosystems and khazan lands, driven by climate change and rapid urban development. The draft plan—now open for public feedback until July 22—warns that rising sea levels, heavier rainfall, and expanding urbanisation are placing growing stress on these sensitive coastal environments.

Developed by the Goa State Biodiversity Board, the plan reveals that sea levels along Goa’s coast have been rising at an average rate of 1.45 mm per year (±0.46 mm) between 1969 and 2013. If this trend continues, sea levels could rise by approximately 0.48 feet over the next century. Additionally, Goa’s annual rainfall has increased by 68% from 1901 to 2018, and average temperatures have risen by over 1°C since the early 20th century.

The report also underscores a dramatic shift in the Arabian Sea’s climate

since 1995, with a five-fold increase in intense cyclones. Between 1980 and 2020, there has been a marked escalation in the frequency, intensity, and duration of cyclonic storms—with cyclone activity spiking by 52% in the past 20 years alone.

These mounting climate impacts threaten to reduce the productivity of Goa’s mangrove forests and disrupt habitats for key species such as crocodiles and various bird populations. The draft warns that changes in salinity levels could lead to the decline of saline-intolerant mangrove species, while khazan lands—traditionally reclaimed for agriculture and aquaculture—face heightened risks of flooding and long-term ecological damage.

In light of these findings, the GSBSAP calls for urgent, climate-resilient conservation strategies to protect Goa’s rich and diverse ecosystems. Citizens are encouraged to review the plan and provide their input to help shape the state’s biodiversity and environmental policies for a more sustainable future.

23-year-old woman dies in accident at Verna

Team Herald

VASCO: A 23-year-old pedestrian woman from Quepem, lost her life in a fatal accident at Verna after being allegedly hit by an SUV driven by an engineering college student on Saturday. The deceased has been identified as Anisha Borkar. One more young woman from Karwar who was also crossing the road near an automobile showroom at Verna was injured.

The car was driven by a 19-year-old engineering student who was on his way to the college at Verna. He reportedly went to the Verna police station and reported the accident.

Both the injured were rushed to the primary health centre at Cansaulim where Anisha was declared dead. The other victim Akshata Naik is currently undergoing treatment at the same PHC.

An FIR has been registered against the driver under Sections 281, 125(B), and 106(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, along with Sections 196 and 190(2) of the Motor Vehicle Act.

PSI Pramila Fernandes is conducting investigations under the guidance of Verna PI Anand Shirodkar and the overall guidance of Mormugao DySP Gurudas Kadam.

Bus operators fill potholes in protest over dangerous road conditions

Team Herald

VASCO: In a unique protest the bus operators on Saturday filled potholes to highlight the pathetic conditions of roads.

A group of bus owners along with their drivers filled potholed stretch with stones and mud near the Umiya Building at Sancoale. This was to draw the attention of the authorities to the poor condition of the road impacted due to ongoing construction work of the flyover by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).

The drivers complained that driving buses with passengers everyday was extremely risky. The protestors said that though their safety concerns had been ignored repeatedly, they hoped that the authorities would now wake up and take measures to repair the road stretch.

They stated that the potholes were deep and uneven, and with the road constantly degrading, the



Potholed stretch near Umiya Building, Sancoale, being filled with stones and mud.

road was in bad shape and accidents were just waiting to happen. They matter was brought to the notice of the authorities but they are turning a blind eye. They also slammed the NHAI contractor.

One of the reasons for this unique protest was also due to a recent fatal minibus accident near Queeny Nagar, Velsao,

where the conductor and a passenger died. Though the accident was reported due to driver’s alleged intoxication, bus operators claim that poor condition of the road was the main reason. The road is uneven and the vehicle can lose its balance, they argued. It is also causing damage to vehicles, they added.

According to them, a near

mishap was averted when a minibus loaded with passengers almost tilted on the deteriorating road stretch on Friday.

The bus operators have appealed to the concerned authorities to hold the contractor accountable and to carry out urgent road repairs to ensure the safety of commuters and prevent further accidents.

IPSCDL claims to ‘complete’ Taad Mad road stretch as per HC deadlines

Smart City road opened to traffic, but hazards remain as footpath and pavement works continue

Team Herald

PANJIM: Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Limited (IPSCDL) has claimed it has completed the construction of a new concrete road at St Inez, meeting the High Court-mandated deadline of May 31.

Though the road stretch from Taad Maad to Tonca has been opened to traffic, the works are far from complete. There is a dangerous open pit on the footpath, while pavement works are ongoing on one side of the road, and on the other, pavement works

have yet to begin. The stretch remains hazardous for motorists and pedestrians alike, with heavy machinery still operating on the road.

IPSCDL stated that the road is now open to the public. It forms part of the first Smart Road developed in the capital city, with the 200-metre stretch from Taad Mad to the Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) at Tonca serving as a focal point of the project. This section required extensive underground utility works, including the installation of a 710-mm diameter trunk sewerage line, which is ex-

pected to improve the area’s sanitation and wastewater management systems.

Additional infrastructure work included the construction of manholes, house connection chambers, utility ducts, and service crossings.

The agency also noted that the team had to navigate complex geological conditions, including loose soil and a high water table. These challenges required the implementation of advanced dewatering techniques and robust shoring methods to stabilise excavation zones and ensure safety.

GAKUVED demands ban on Janajati Suraksha Manch over alleged anti-tribal conspiracy

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Gowda, Kunbi, Velip and Dhangars (GAKUVED) Federation on Saturday demanded a ban on the Janajati Suraksha Manch, which it alleged was conspiring to delist and delete converted tribals in the State.

Addressing a press conference in the city, GAKUVED Federation president Govind Shirodkar said that the Janajati Suraksha Manch has demanded that converted tribals, specifically Christian Gawadas, no longer be given the benefits of ‘Scheduled Tribe’ status and that they be delisted from the ST lists. He alleged that the Janajati Suraksha Manch is dividing the minds of tribals across the country with the slogan: “Whoever is a Christian is not a tribal and whoever is a tribal is not a Christian.”

According to Shirodkar, tribals are neither Hindu, Christian, nor Muslim. He stated that it is a universal truth that the traditions,

“Goan tribals will not tolerate any form of religious strife among the tribals by any Hindutva organisation, and in the future, the conspiracy to divide the minds of the Goan tribals should be stopped forever,

—Govind Shirodkar, GAKUVED Federation president

customs and culture of the tribals constitute their religion. “Goan tribals will not tolerate any form of religious strife among the tribals by any Hindutva organisation, and in the future, the conspiracy to divide the minds of the Goan tribals should be stopped forever,” he demanded.

Shirodkar pointed out that in 1928, a Hindutva organisation named Masurashram introduced a new caste of ‘Navhindu’ or neo-Hindu Gawade by dividing the Goan tribal community, and that the Gomatank Gawade community continues to

suffer the consequences of this division to this day. He cautioned that if the rights of tribals are denied to converted Gawadas or Christian Gawadas, then tribal reservations will be reduced by about 40 to 50 per cent in all sectors.

Referring to the presence of office-bearers of UTAA (United Tribals Association Alliance) at the meeting organised by the Janajati Suraksha Manch, Shirodkar alleged that UTAA has brought in this organisation to create conflict among tribals. “This also proves that UTAA does not support converted tribals,” he claimed.

In response to a question, Shirodkar said that four Goa MLAs belong to the ST community, but they had not raised the causes of the tribal community in the Legislative Assembly to the same extent as opposition members had.

Ramakrishna Jalmi, Joseph Vaz and others were also present during the press briefing.

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