

BHOMA LOCALS PANIC AS SOIL TESTING BEGINS FOR HIGHWAY EXPANSION

Threaten intense stir similar to the 1995 Nylon 6,6 protest at Bhutkhamb Priol-Ponda, if work is not halted

Team Herald

PONDA: Residents of Bhoma were seen in a state of panic on Saturday after soil testing began for the construction of flyover pillars as part of the National Highway expansion project. Locals said that despite repeated appeals to save their village from destruction, the government was forcefully pushing ahead with the expansion work.

Sanjay Naik, a leader of the Bhoma community, warned that the government's actions could spark a major agitation similar to the Nylon 66 protest once held at Bhutkhamb Plateau in Priol, which had even claimed a life.

Naik held the government responsible in advance for any untoward incidents that may arise due to the growing unrest.



He said the Bhoma gram sabha had recently passed a resolution demanding that the government halt the work and share the NH alignment plan with villagers. The resolution, passed last Sunday, urged authorities to construct a bypass through the fields instead. However, there has been no response from the government, and the panchayat has not provided any feedback either.

"The people of Bhoma are left with no option but to intensify the agitation against the highway expansion," Naik said. "We don't know what could happen as a result of the agitation, but the government will be solely responsible."

Naik appealed to South Goa MP Captain Viriato Fernandes, Fatorda MLA Vijay Sardesai, opposition party leaders, and NGOs across Goa to support their cause.

He further stated that although the government claims that the six-lane expansion will be completed within 25 metres of the 60-metre acquired land, the inclusion of a service road

makes that impossible, and many houses will be demolished.

"Our main concern is that we are going to lose our culture and heritage. The highway expansion is set to encroach upon structures and landmarks that are several centuries old," Naik said.

He added that when a delegation from Bhoma met Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, he had shown a positive response to their demand. "However, local politicians are not supporting us due to vested interests. They are willing to sacrifice our homes, our culture, and the entire village," he alleged.

"If the government goes ahead with this forced highway widening, we Bhomkars will be left with nothing. That's why the agitation will intensify in the days to come," Naik warned.

Collector issues Prohibitory orders in Panjim

Team Herald

PANJIM: North Goa District Collector Ankit Yadav, IAS, by an order has prohibited assembly of five or more persons, processions, protests or morchas in and around Junta House, Panjim and its surrounding areas falling under the jurisdiction of Panaji Police Station on Monday June 2. The Collector has also prohibited carrying of arms, sticks, banners, placards, loudspeakers, and any other article that may be used for unlawful assembly on Monday. The order has been issued in the wake of protest planned by taxi operators to oppose the Goa Transport Aggregator Guidelines, 2025.

The restrictions will not apply to public servants on duty and to bonafide marriages or funeral procession or any special occasion and for which prior permission in writing has been obtained from the District Magistrate

Two drown during picnic along Usgao-Ganjam river

Barrage opening caused water level to rise suddenly, catching the group unawares; two youths from Punjab and Maharashtra dead, two others rescued

Team Herald

PONDA: A picnic turned tragic on Sunday when two members of a group of seven drowned while bathing in the Usgao-Ganjam river. Two others were rescued, while one of the victims, identified as Luvpreet Singh (24) from Punjab, was found later that evening. The second missing person, Dhananjay Khainath (18) from Maharashtra, remained untraced late into the night and is feared to have drowned. Search operations are set to resume on Monday morning, police said.

According to Ponda DySP Shivram Vaigankar, the incident occurred around 2.30pm when the group went swimming near the bandhara. At around 4pm, four of them were swept away by the current. While

two were rescued by a local youth, the other two went missing.

DySP Vaigankar noted that the group, visiting Goa for sports training at the Sports Authority of India (SAI), was staying at the SAI hostel in Curti. He added that a lack of swimming skills may have contributed to the tragedy and pointed out that bathing in the river is prohibited.

Local sources said the water level had risen due to one gate of the barrage being opened, possibly catching the youths off guard as they bathed downstream.

Ponda Fire Station in-charge Sushil Morajkar said the rescue team responded immediately after receiving a call. Of the four swept away, two managed to take refuge on a rock mid-river and were rescued by local

resident Pranav Gaude. The body of one victim was recovered in the evening, while the search for the second had to be suspended due to darkness.

Usgao-Ganjam Sarpanch Ramnath Dangui questioned the lack of enforcement of the Collector's order prohibiting river and waterfall access during the monsoon. He stressed that merely issuing an order is insufficient without proper implementation, such as deploying police or lifeguards at known picnic spots.

He added that many visitors consume alcohol while bathing, increasing the risk. Dangui called for immediate installation of warning signs and better coordination between authorities, especially to alert people downstream when the WRD opens barrage gates.

Motorecyclist killed in collision at Shigao-Collem



Team Herald

PONDA: A motorcycle rider died on the spot in an accident involving three vehicles at Wakikuyan, Shigao-Collem.

According to initial reports, a car proceeding from Mollem towards Curchorem tried to overtake another vehicle near Shigao Collem and the driver apparently lost control and collided head-on with a motorcycle. The impact was such that the rider, identified as 35-year-old Manshu Gawda from Karnataka, sustained serious injuries.

A scooter rider travelling behind the motorcycle witnessed the collision and realising the car was heading towards them, jumped off the scooter to avoid impact. The car involved in the accident subsequently veered off the road and collided with a roadside fence.

The police have detained the car driver, identified as Ajwal Patil from Collem, and are conducting further investigations. All three vehicles were damaged.

IIHM launches GPT for hospitality sector Industry veterans hail the launch of 'NamAlste'

Team Herald

KOLKATA: The world's first-ever hospitality-exclusive GPT has been launched in Kolkata by Chairman of IIHM, Dr. Suborno Bose.

The NamAlste IIHM Hospitality GPT was introduced and launched before a global audience of hospitality leaders, students, and stakeholders, as a vehicle of limitless possibilities. NamAlste - HospitalityGPT is the world's first Generative AI-powered knowledge engine tailored for the hospitality industry and will give closed-user access to information and research that will be unmatched.

Proudly Made in India, Made by Indians, NamAlste is a customized Large Language Model (LLM) specifically engineered for the hospitality sector. It empowers AI-driven learning, decision-making, and innovation—ushering in a new era of hospitality intelligence.

As the creator of NamAlste IIHM Hospitality GPT, Dr. Bose said,

"The industry is ready to accept it. The industry is waiting. It's a global mind changer. It is not just a tech marvel but a dawn of a new way of thinking and the dawn of reimagining

things."

During his vision address at the launch event at IIHM Global Campus—and joined virtually from India and nations across time zones and geographies—Dr. M Bose said, "It is an engine of innovation, excellence, and a bold announcement that India is at par with the best in the world. The time for India to lead has come - and we have arrived. If the US can have Google, and China can have DeepSeek, India can - and now does - have NamAlste, which is designed to empower students, faculty, hospitality professionals, and industry stakeholders with real-time access to insights, trends, and global best practices."

Entiovi Technologies was the tech partner of the project that developed NamAlste. Sanjoy Chatterjee, Director, Entiovi Technologies, said during his vision address: "The whole platform is built on open-source technology. The uniqueness is creating the knowledge base from 60 countries. Imagine a student in Bengal writing a question about Japanese culinary history and the answer coming from Japanese documents in Bengali."

Probe underway into boat fire at Malim jetty

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Police Inspector (PI) at the Panjim Coastal Security Police Station, Ajit Umarye, stated that investigations have commenced regarding the fire on a boat anchored at the Malim jetty in the early hours of Saturday.

"The officers had spoken to residents in nearby houses and others in the vicinity. The owner had not raised suspicion against anyone and the investigation was progressing well and we optimistic of solving the issue," Umarye said.

The fire caused the ropes securing the boat to snap, allowing it to drift slowly towards Panjim. A potential disaster was averted thanks to the swift intervention of a Captain of Ports (CoP) tugboat, which managed to steer the burning cruise vessel away from the high-risk casino zone, preventing the situation from escalating.

Fire and Emergency Services (FES) teams rushed to the scene and brought the blaze under control. The cause of the fire has yet to be determined, and authorities are currently assessing the extent of the damage.

Bishop inaugurates new Pastoral Year, unveils letter on theme of 'Hope'

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Auxiliary Bishop of Goa and Daman, Simiao Fernandes, inaugurated the new Pastoral Year 2025-26 and released the Pastoral Letter during a solemn Jubilee celebration of the Pastoral Secretariat, held at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Valpoi, on 1st June 2025.

The Pastoral Letter, authored by His Eminence Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrão, is addressed to the Priests, Religious, Lay Faithful, and People of Goodwill in the Archdiocese of Goa and Daman. It elaborates the theme of the year: "Hope Does Not Disappoint Us" (Rom. 5:5).



Following a warm welcome by Parish Priest Fr Winston Barbosa and Assistant Priest Fr Jaime Robert Fernandes, the theme and logo of the Pastoral Year were unveiled, and the year officially declared open. Fr Leo Fernandes, Executive Secretary of the Pastoral Secretariat, explained that the Jubilee Cross depicted in the logo is made of 198 pieces of wood, symbolising

the churches and chapels of the Archdiocese, and the unwavering hope offered through Christ's salvific death. The rays emanating from the Cross represent outreach to the sick, poor, migrants, people with disabilities, the youth, elderly, families, and all of creation, while the waves beneath it signify life's trials and the Cross as our anchor.

In his homily, Fr Leo

called on the faithful to be agents of hope, especially to the marginalised, and urged youth to be active in parish life, noting they are the Church's present, not just its future.

At the end of Mass, Bishop Simiao released the Pastoral Letter and Bull of Indiction. He summarised the letter, saying it focuses on the Ordinary Jubilee 2025, explaining 'hope' through Scripture, Church teaching, and Pope Francis' Bull of Indiction. The letter provides practical ways to be beacons of hope to various groups at diocesan, deanery, and parish levels, and presents Mother Mary and St Joseph Vaz as models of hope.

Draft Transport Aggregator Guidelines 2025 released

Now open for public feedback over next 30 days before finalisation

Team Herald

PANJIM: In a significant step towards modernising its transportation system, the Goa government has released the draft Transport Aggregator Guidelines 2025, which aim to introduce app-based taxi services in the State, which has traditionally been served by conventional cab operators.

The draft, officially announced on May 20, is now open for public feedback over the next 30 days before it is finalised, states a press release.

The guidelines are designed to tackle ongoing problems like expensive fares, lack of easy digital access, and difficulties for commuters, especially at night, while making sure local drivers aren't left out.

The policy sets clear and absolute rules for app-based taxi and bike taxi services operating in Goa. Only vehicles registered in the State or holding valid permits can operate, and drivers must possess a PSV (Private Service Vehicle) badge. Drivers may work with multiple platforms, and aggregators are barred

from deducting commissions, ensuring drivers receive the full fare. Payments to drivers must be made within 72 hours, with a 25% penalty on aggregators for delays.

All drivers will receive health insurance coverage of at least Rs 10 lakh, with extended coverage for the families of women drivers. Women drivers are eligible for additional benefits such as vehicle insurance reimbursement and subsidies for purchasing electric vehicles. The fare is fixed at Rs 32 per kilometre, with the final passenger cost averaging Rs 38 per kilometre after taxes and platform charges. Sample trip costs include Rs 1,487 from Mopa Airport to Panjim and Rs 2,173 from Panjim to Palolem.

The draft guidelines have received backing from key industry players. An Uber spokesperson said, "We believe tourists as much as locals in Goa deserve more mobility choices, and there is already strong existing demand for reliable ride options in the State. This regulatory update makes it possible for platforms like Uber to serve that demand

more effectively and responsibly. As we review the draft guidelines in detail, we will submit our formal comments and continue collaborating with all stakeholders to ensure the final framework delivers long-term value for riders, drivers, and Goa's tourism-led economy."

A Rapido spokesperson said, "The Transport Aggregator Policy introduced by the Goa Transport Department is a progressive step toward building a transparent, safe, and inclusive mobility ecosystem. At Rapido, we believe this policy marks a significant milestone in digitizing transportation and empowering local micro-entrepreneurs. We are excited to launch our services in Goa once the regulations are finalised and we obtain the necessary statutory licences, offering reliable and tech-enabled mobility solutions for both tourists and residents."

The Rapido spokesperson said, "Beyond improving last-mile connectivity, our goal is to create 3-4 lakh livelihood opportunities over the next year, empowering our captains with meaningful earning

potential. Safety remains at the heart of our platform, with features like SOS alerts, trip tracking, and driver verification designed to ensure peace of mind for our riders. We look forward to working closely with the Goa Transport Department and all stakeholders to ensure a seamless rollout and to contribute meaningfully to the state's progress in mobility, employment generation, and overall economic growth."

Goa's charm draws millions, but getting around has become a nightmare for both locals and tourists. With over 10 million visitors in 2024 and traffic that feels like a daily battle, the State's roads are bursting at the seams. Taxis are often hard to find, prices are unclear, and frustration runs high.

By introducing the Transport Aggregator Policy, the government aims to untangle this gridlock. With Goa's roads choked by an overwhelming number of vehicles, the policy is seen as a much-needed step toward easing congestion, bringing price transparency, and ensuring smoother, safer taxi experiences for everyone.

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