

# Locals: Taxi apps not just for tourists, we need affordable transport too

Goans counter cabbies' claims that taxi aggregator apps would only cater to tourists

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Several residents from across Goa have come forward in support of the draft Transport Aggregator Guidelines 2025, rejecting the claim made by some taxi operators and political parties that app-based taxi services are only for tourists. They argue that the current state of public transport and the inaccessibility of affordable taxis make such services a much-needed option for Goans as well.

Locals said the repeated narrative that Goans don't need taxi services because most households own private vehicles ignores the daily transport struggles faced by many. "Owning a vehicle has become a necessity, not a luxury," said a resident from Cuncolim. "It's only because there's no reliable, affordable public transport that Goans are forced to be self-reliant. But that

doesn't mean we wouldn't prefer the convenience of booking a taxi, especially through a regulated app service."

They pointed out that unlike larger states where aggregator taxis are now a common transport mode even for residents who own vehicles, Goa still lacks this option. "Even in cities like Mumbai and Bengaluru, people who have cars still use Ola or Uber for short trips or late-night travel. Why should Goa be left out of this convenience?" said a Margao resident working in the private sector.

Goans also highlighted the challenges of public transport after dark, particularly for those living outside the main hubs. "Beyond Panjim, Margao, Mapusa and Vasco, and outside the limited intercity routes, it's next to impossible to get home at night without your own vehicle," said a working woman from Quepem. "Aggregator taxis can

## VERNA INDUSTRIAL ESTATE BODY BACKS TRANSPORT APP POLICY, HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR SHIFT WORKERS

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** The Verna Industries Association (VIA) has extended its full support to the recently introduced Goa Transport Aggregator Guidelines 2025, terming the move a vital step toward enhancing workforce mobility and strengthening the state's industrial ecosystem. In a press statement, VIA

welcomed the government's initiative to regularise app-based taxi services under a fair and transparent regulatory framework. VIA further noted that dependable transport is essential for thousands of workers and professionals employed at Verna Industrial Estate, one of Goa's largest manufacturing hubs. The association highlighted long-standing challenges faced by shift

workers, women employees, and those commuting from peripheral areas, due to the lack of structured transport solutions. VIA said the new guidelines also safeguard the interests of local taxi operators. VIA President Kalpak Arware stated that the guidelines have the potential to boost employee productivity, reduce traffic congestion, and improve connectivity to industrial zones.

bridge that gap."

Residents further noted that the current system, where taxis often charge rates perceived as disproportionately high, leaves locals with few alternatives. They believe app-based taxi aggregators could bring transparency, fair pricing, and better accessibility. "Not everyone in a

family drives. Not everyone can afford to spend high taxi costs for say a 5-km drive. And with rising fuel costs, even using your own car all the time isn't economical," said a college lecturer from Verna.

While acknowledging that traditional taxi operators may have concerns about their live-

lihood, the residents said the government can address those fears through well-thought-out regulation without depriving the wider public of modern transport options. "We understand the hesitation of the taxi owners, but we cannot be stuck in the past. This service is for us too," said a resident of Chicalim.

# CM Sawant reviews Margao monsoon prep, orders urgent fixes

Dismisses fear of third wave of Covid, reiterates 'bivpachi garaz na'



Team Herald

**MARGAO:** In a rare late-night meeting at the South Goa Collectorate, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant conducted a detailed review of monsoon preparedness and governance issues with key officials and elected representatives. The Chief Minister assured the Margao Municipal Council of budgetary support, while urging them to fast-track works using existing allocations and 14th Finance Commission grants. A significant development was the identification of 12 unsafe buildings in Margao by the Directorate of Municipal Administration, with two to three structures set to be demolished in the coming days. Funds for the demolition have already been allocated.

Monsoon preparedness dominated the discussion, with departments such as the Electricity, Fire, and Water Resources instructed to complete all pending works urgently—this includes desilting drains, repairing roads, removing dangerous trees, and preventing water stagnation. Following a recent incident where a sewer line was damaged during underground cabling, the CM halted all such work and set a deadline for repairs, criticising the lack of coordination between departments.

Projects under GSUDA in Margao and elsewhere in South Goa were reviewed and given a one-month deadline for resolution of pending issues. Sawant also ordered a crackdown on illegally parked rental vehicles in Margao, giving traffic

police eight days to act, including towing abandoned vehicles and clearing footpaths.

Law and order issues were also addressed, with Konkani Railway directed to step up security across stations. On waste management, Sawant and Margao MLA Digambar Kamat reported progress at the Sonsoddo Hill and Legacy dump sites, while announcing that waste from Sonsoddo will now be treated on-site through a dedicated facility. The MMC will also receive electric vehicles for garbage collection.

The CM responded to a complaint about illegal construction damaging Fatorda stadium's wall by ordering an immediate inspection. Forest rights cases will be expedited under the Collector's supervision, and 16 abandoned stone quarries deemed hazardous during the monsoon will be fenced off. He also reviewed the beautification of River Sal.

The Chief Minister also called for faster clearance of pending cases at mamlatdar and deputy collector levels and endorsed FDA-led initiatives in the district. On health concerns, he noted that Environment Minister Aleixo Sequeira is recovering well in Delhi after completing major treatment. Responding to media queries about a third wave of COVID-19, Sawant said case numbers are low and reiterated his earlier line, "bivpachi garaz na" (no need to fear). Concluding the session, Sawant warned that officials who fail to complete monsoon tasks within one to two weeks will face consequences.

# Ponda cabbies appeal to PM, Gadkari to block Ola, Uber

Team Herald

**PONDA:** The Ponda Tourist Taxi Association, led by its president Krishna Naik, gathered at Kranti Maidan on Sunday to voice strong opposition to the government's proposed app-based taxi policy.

Naik warned that introducing services like Ola and Uber would spell the end of the traditional Goan taxi business and hand over control to large corporate lobbies. The association has sent open letters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, urging intervention against what they term a

threat to their livelihood.

While the government claims the policy will boost tourism, Naik argued that only around 20% of Goa – from Fort Aguada to Panaji and a few beaches – sees substantial tourist traffic. The remaining 80%, including areas like Ponda, is largely rural, and taxi operators here rely almost entirely on local customers.

He added that such a system might be feasible only a decade later, when Goa is developed on par with metropolitan cities. Even in high-tourism zones, taxi operators face challenges from rent-a-car and rent-a-bike services, as well as hotels

running their own taxi fleets.

Naik demanded a uniform implementation of gazetted taxi fares across Goa, including for app-based services like Goa Miles. He said that while traditional operators follow official rates, Goa Miles undercuts them by 25%, leading to customer disputes and friction between drivers.

Responding to allegations of overcharging, Naik said a few bad actors should not tarnish the entire community. "If one Goan commits a crime, it doesn't mean all Goans are criminals," he said, adding that most tourist taxi operators are honest workers supporting their families.

# AAP MLAs back cabbies, want policy scrapped

Say new app system will cripple livelihoods

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Taxi operators from across Goa met Aam Aadmi Party MLAs Venzy Viegas (Benaullim) and Cruz Silva (Velim) this week, urging withdrawal of the draft Transport Aggregator Guidelines 2025. Calling the 20 May gazette "one-sided", the legislators said rules were framed without consulting traditional cab owners who have served tourists for decades.

"If enforced, the new app-based system will cripple Goan taxi livelihoods," Viegas warned, adding that operators present "hold all permits and have run registered businesses for years." Silva argued the government should shield local firms, not

open the field to large platforms that could displace them.

AAP has already opposed aggregator models in coastal belts on similar grounds, the MLAs noted, citing other states where app platforms marginalised traditional drivers. They pledged to raise the issue in the Assembly and press for scrapping the notification.

To craft a "balanced, sustainable" policy, Viegas and Silva proposed a joint committee of officials, union representatives and stakeholders to redraft guidelines through transparent dialogue. The duo also joined operators on the ground during their protest, reiterating full support and warning that continued unrest could dent Goa's tourism image.

# Vishwajit Rane refutes bribery charges

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Refuting allegations of accepting bribes in exchange for government jobs, Health Minister Vishwajit Rane has challenged his critics to produce evidence and file a formal police complaint if

they possess proof of any wrongdoing.

Speaking to reporters in Margao, Rane stated, "I have not accepted a single paisa for giving the jobs. If anyone has any proof, they can go and file an FIR against me with the police — no problem."

He firmly maintained that all job appointments under his departments are made strictly on merit.

The controversy arose after the Congress party, led by Goa Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) president Amit Patkar,

accused Rane and his departments of running a "jobs-for-cash" scam. The Congress claimed to be in possession of documents and an audio recording that allegedly implicate Rane in the scam.

According to the party, fake appointment and of-

fer letters were issued to job seekers in exchange for money, with the documents reportedly bearing the forged signatures of officials from the Health, Urban Development, and Town and Country Planning departments — all of which fall under Rane's portfolio.

# Infant abandoned on bench near Colva chapel

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Colva Police recovered a one-month-old baby girl abandoned on a bench near a chapel in Colva.

PSI Sunil Patil and his team transported her to the South Goa District Hospital for medical attention. Authorities confirmed that

the baby girl is receiving treatment and is in stable condition.

The police registered a case against unknown individuals under BNS and the Goa Children's Act. No one has come forward to claim the baby. The police are reviewing CCTV footage from the vicinity.

The previous night, two

women reported that they had passed by the chapel area on a motorcycle around 9.30 pm.

They noticed something on the bench but initially mistook it for a doll. On returning to the location, they realised it was a baby. They alerted the neighbourhood, who then contacted the police.

# Fishers urge minister to enforce LED fishing ban

**MARGAO:** Goenchea Raponkarancho Ekvott (GRE) and other fishing groups met Fisheries Minister Nilkanth Halarnkar in Porvorum to push for action on eleven key demands affecting the fishing community.

GRE General Secretary Olencio Simoes said the primary focus was enforcement of the High Court of Bombay at Goa's May 8, 2025 order banning LED light fishing, bull trawling, and pair trawling. GRE urged the minister to ensure strict implementation of all seven directions in the order and to direct the Coast Guard, Coastal Police, and Fisheries Department to enforce compliance, citing continued violations.

GRE also sought a ban on gensets and diesel generators on mechanised boats, stating they are misused to power banned LED lights, threatening marine life and traditional livelihoods.

Calling for stronger penalties and better enforcement, GRE highlighted the lack of amendments to the Goa, Daman and Diu Marine Fishing Regulation Act since its enactment 45 years ago, and pushed for reforms to curb illegal fishing.

# Don Bosco Society launches Kharif season with drone tech; CM pledges push for mechanised agri

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** The Don Bosco Society, under the leadership of Fr George Quadros, launched the Kharif season in Raia on Wednesday with a strong emphasis on mechanised farming and drone-based technology. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who inaugurated the event, praised the Society's pioneering work in agricultural innovation and community empowerment. Also present was Director of Agriculture Sandeep Fal Dessai, who lauded Fr Quadros for his decade-long contribution to transforming paddy cultivation in Goa.

Fr Quadros, who has led the mechanisation drive since its inception, has expanded the area under mechanical paddy transplantation



from just 40,000 square metres to 40 lakh square metres over the past ten years, with critical support from the state Agriculture Department. The latest leap involves the use of drones—not only to assist with plantation but also for pesticide spraying, significantly improving efficiency and coverage.

Applauding these efforts, CM

Sawant commended the Don Bosco Society, led by Provincial Fr Clive Telles, for its role in creating Goencho Xetkar, a grassroots collective aimed at replicating this successful model across Goa. The Chief Minister also tried his hand at flying one of the drones. Unveiling the government's long-term vision, Sawant announced a tenfold expansion of mechanised agriculture—from the current 400 hectares to 4,000 hectares—over the next decade. To achieve this, the state will provide subsidies on drones, transplanters, and other modern farm machinery to Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) cultivating up to one lakh square metres of land.

As part of the central government's Drone Didi scheme, Goa will procure 10 drones within a month, which will be operated by women for agricultural purposes. "We are working to empower women farmers while increasing productivity through advanced tools," said the Chief Minister.

Emphasising sustainability alongside mechanisation, he called for collective efforts to raise Goa's forest cover from the existing 66% to 76% in the coming years.

In a further boost to agricultural entrepreneurship, Sawant also announced that a Central government-approved Agri Clinic training programme will commence in Sakhal in July 2025. Open to BSc Agriculture graduates, the three-month course will make participants eligible for 80% subsidised loans to set up agri clinics.

# GMC to get 33 more PG seats in phases

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** The Goa Medical College (GMC) will get 33 additional postgraduate seats in a phased manner, Health Minister Vishwajit Rane announced, stating that the National Medical Commission (NMC) had approved the expansion following efforts made by the state government.

Rane said the Dean of GMC has been directed to start the process of recruiting additional senior resident doctors. "We will not wait for the last minute. We must begin the process from now," he said.

He added that the NMC team that visited GMC earlier this year was satisfied with the infrastructure and faculty strength, and approval has now been granted.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said the government was "positive" about the demand for a stipend hike by junior resident doctors and that a decision would be rolled out soon. He made the remarks after meeting representatives of the Association of Junior Resident Doctors at the Secretariat on Tuesday.

# Vertical forests soon to be mandatory in high-rise bldgs

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** In a significant move towards sustainable urban development, Goa's Urban Development and Town and Country Planning (TCP) Minister Vishwajit Rane announced that the state government will soon issue an official notification mandating the implementation of the vertical forest concept for all buildings with a Floor Space Index (FSI) ranging between 250 and 300.

Speaking to reporters at a tree plantation drive at the Sonsoddo dump yard in Margao, Rane emphasised that the initiative is aimed at increasing urban greenery and promoting environmentally friendly construction practices, particularly in high-density areas.

He described the decision as a "bold step" towards creating greener urban spaces that align with global standards of eco-conscious develop-

ment.

According to Rane, all necessary approvals have already been granted, and the guidelines for the vertical forest concept will be formally notified shortly. The government's plan is to make the integration of green infrastructure a core requirement in the design and construction of large-scale residential and commercial buildings.

Importantly, the Minister made it clear that Occupancy Certificates (OCs) will only be issued to developers who fully comply with the vertical forest guidelines.

The vertical forest concept, made popular globally through iconic projects in cities like Milan and Singapore, involves incorporating trees, shrubs, and other greenery into the architecture of buildings—often on balconies and façades—to reduce pollution, lower ambient temperatures, and improve biodiversity in urban environments.