

Taxi apps not luxury, but necessity: Industry bodies applaud guidelines

Call them a thoughtful balance between enabling digital transport innovation and safeguarding local livelihoods; say the new system will boost Goa's growth

Team Herald

MARGAO: Several The Goa Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) and ASSOCHAM, Goa State Council, have welcomed the Goa Transport Aggregator Guidelines 2025, describing them as a timely and progressive step towards strengthening the state's mobility ecosystem.

In a statement, the GCCCI emphasised that in today's business environment—where digital accessibility, reliability, and ease of movement are critical to productivity—the availability of regulated app-based taxi services is no longer a luxury but a necessity.

"Across sectors—tourism, manufacturing, real estate, retail, logistics, and services—businesses in Goa are increasingly reliant on a workforce that requires dependable and safe transport options. App-based taxi services bring much-needed convenience, improve workforce efficiency, and create a more investor-friendly environment by

RESOLVE TAXI ISSUE TO SAVE TOURISM: LOBO

Team Herald

CALANGUTE: "The taxi issue will be resolved 100%—it's the need of the hour to save our tourism industry," said Calangute MLA Michael Lobo on Thursday. Lobo stated that the state government will form a coordination committee comprising various taxi unions, transport department officials, and other stakeholders to address the ongoing dispute over taxi aggregators and hold meetings to discuss the way forward. "Tourists

should not face any inconvenience—whether while sitting in a cab or while making their payment. We also discussed several other issues affecting tourists, which must be addressed," Lobo added, following a meeting with representatives of the North and South Goa taxi unions, along with Siolim MLA Delilah Lobo. "We stand by our taxi owners. We do not want any more aggregators, but at the same time, there must be transparency. We have to resolve this issue once and for all," said Siolim MLA Delilah Lobo.

enhancing the ease of doing business," the Chamber said. It further noted that the guidelines strike a thoughtful balance between enabling digital transport innovation and safeguarding local livelihoods.

"By ensuring drivers receive the full government-notified fare, mandating timely payments, and introducing safeguards such as health insurance and vehicle subsidies, the framework reflects both economic foresight and social responsibility," the

statement added. The GCCCI has urged the government to roll out the guidelines in a time-bound manner, calling on all stakeholders—aggregators, drivers, and citizens—to contribute constructively to building a transparent, fair, and technology-driven mobility system that will support Goa's future growth.

In a separate statement, Mangurish Pai Raiker, Chairman of ASSOCHAM, Goa State Council, also urged the state government to implement

the guidelines with transparency. He appealed to private stakeholders—aggregators, entrepreneurs, and transport operators—to work collaboratively in building a mobility ecosystem that reinforces Goa's status as a dynamic, investment-ready state.

"This initiative marks a constructive step towards aligning Goa's transport sector with modern needs, and it strikes a pragmatic balance between digital innovation and socio-economic inclusion," Raiker stated.

Women urged to speak up for taxi apps

Team Herald

PANJIM: The GCCCI-Women's Wing will host an awareness programme for women to speak up for a safer, more reliable app-driven transport system, which only employs locally-based drivers. This initiative aims to focus on the collective voice of Goan women - from college students, working professionals, senior citizens, to homemakers - on why local taxi app service is a pressing need for Goa to help women do better in day to day life and achieve more.

The programme will be held at the Surendrababu Timblo Convention Hall, Panjim at 11 am on Saturday, June 7.

Cong pledges full support for cabbies

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Congress on Friday extended full support to taxi operators and demanded the immediate withdrawal of the Transport Aggregator Guidelines, 2025.

Speaking to reporters after meeting taxi operators at the State Legislative Assembly complex, Leader of the Opposition Yuri Alemao criticised the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government for neglecting the interests of taxi operators, whom he described as the backbone and ambassadors of Goa's tourism industry.

"This government has failed both in formulating and implementing a coherent tourism policy. I want to tell this government that the Gazette notification must be scrapped first. Whatever steps the taxi operators choose to take, the Congress party will stand firmly behind them. No doubt, technology is the need of the hour, but it should not come at the cost of the livelihoods of taxi operators," Alemao said. "The taxi operators must be taken into confidence. We've asked them to stay united—we are with them. This goes beyond party lines. If we fail to protect them, we fail in our duty as MLAs," he said.

Taxi operators ready to embrace tech, but reject outside players

Team Herald

PANJIM: Opposition to the cab aggregator guidelines continues to mount, with senior members of various taxi associations voicing strong objections. They argue the market is tourist-driven, with most locals owning vehicles and rarely using taxis, making aggregator platforms unviable for local operators.

Gangaram Phadke, former Executive Secretary of the All Goa Taxi Association (North and South), said, "We oppose the Transport Department's guidelines, especially those that allow outside players to enter Goa. This is not a metropolitan city. These rules were drafted without consulting those of us operating on the ground."

On the local market, he said, "Goa has 15 lakh people, but each city has fewer than 35,000 residents. Not everyone uses taxis. Social

media demand doesn't reflect real usage."

He stressed they are not against technology. "We're ready to go digital, but only on a platform regulated by the Transport Department. Aggregators take a large commission without owning taxis. The burden falls on the driver."

Chetan Kamat, President of the All Goa Taxi Association, also opposed the proposed app. "We already have two."

Why do we need another? Goa Miles came from outside and often argues with tourists. What safety will locals have if more outsiders come in?"

He added, "The app targets the coastal belt but fails in areas like Sattari and Sanguem. Most Goans use their own cars or bikes. We're not against technology, but the government must have a proper dialogue with us. That's not happening."

“Across sectors—be it tourism, manufacturing, real estate, retail, logistics, or services—businesses in Goa are increasingly dependent on a workforce that requires dependable and safe transport options. App-based taxi services bring convenience, enhance workforce efficiency, and create a more investor-friendly environment by improving ease of doing business

— Goa Chamber of Commerce and Industry

“I urge the state government to implement the guidelines in transparent manner, and call on private stakeholders—aggregators, entrepreneurs, and transport operators—to collaborate constructively in building a mobility ecosystem that strengthens Goa's position as a dynamic and investment-ready state

— Mangurish Pai Raiker, Chairman, ASSOCHAM

“We stand by our taxi owners. We do not want any more aggregators, but at the same time, there must be transparency. We have to resolve this issue once and for all

— Delilah Lobo, Siolim MLA

“This government has failed both in formulating and implementing a coherent tourism policy. The Gazette notification must be scrapped first. Whatever steps the taxi operators choose to take, the Congress party will stand firmly behind them. It is shameful that taxi operators have to leave their work and come plead their case

— Yuri Alemao, Leader of Opposition

“Goan people are already struggling. There are over 15 lakh people spread across the state — in Mapusa, Panjim, Margao, and other towns. Each city has fewer than 35,000 residents. Not everyone uses taxis to move around. On social media, people may demand better systems, but that doesn't reflect actual usage

— Gangaram Phadke, former Executive Secy, All Goa Taxi Association

Margao market mess: Citizens decry illegal vending, traffic snarls

Team Herald

MARGAO: Citizens and daily commuters have once again raised alarm over the unchecked retail activity outside the Margao wholesale fish market, where vendors continue to sell fish and other goods at retail rates despite an official ban.

The illegal vending has not only returned in full force but is also choking traffic in the area, raising serious questions about the role—and silence—of local authorities.

The stretch outside the wholesale market, under the jurisdiction of the Margao Municipal Council (MMC), has effectively turned into a roadside bazaar. Vendors have set up stalls along the main road, ignoring repeated complaints and flouting a standing order meant to curb such activity. Enforcement by the MMC has been minimal, if not entirely absent. Adding to the controversy, it has emerged that the South Goa Planning and Development Authority (SGPDA) continues to collect sopo (mar-



ket fees) from these vendors—even though no official tender for sopo collection has been floated. These fees are reportedly being collected without issuing receipts, raising red flags over transparency and possible misappropriation of public funds.

"This is a blatant violation of the rules," said local resident Remedius Fernandes. "Authorities are aware but are simply turning a blind eye. The ban was imposed to bring order. Now it's back to chaos."

Cedrick Pereira, another concerned citizen, added, "The SGPDA is collecting sopo

without receipts and without a valid tender. How is this even legal? And why is the MMC doing nothing when this land falls under their control? People are fed up with the inaction."

Regular commuter Krishna Naik echoed the frustration, especially over the traffic snarls caused by roadside stalls. "It's a nightmare. School buses, ambulances, office commuters—everyone's stuck in the jam. And the authorities? Just silent spectators." Despite mounting public pressure, neither the MMC nor the SGPDA has taken firm action to resolve the situation.

Girl's heartfelt plea to CM: Save 2,000 Cuncolim trees from the axe

Team Herald

MARGAO: An emotional letter written by 10-year-old Vyusti Vijay Prabhu of Cuncolim to Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and Environment Minister Aleixo Sequeira on World Environment Day has struck a chord with Cuncolims and nature lovers across Goa.

In her letter, Vyusti urged the government to reconsider the proposal to axe nearly 2,000 trees for the expansion of the Navelim-Cuncolim highway, appealing for a more sustainable solution that protects Goa's precious green cover. The young girl's words have been widely shared and praised on social media, with locals

hailing her as a voice of conscience in an era of rapid development.

Environmentalist groups have rallied behind the letter, stating that Vyusti has shown more awareness and responsibility than many adults. "This letter is a wake-up call. If a child can recognise the value of trees, why can't our policymakers?" said Raksha Naik from Cuncolim.

Carl Dias from Navelim added, "Development cannot come at the cost of destroying what makes Goa unique."

Locals hope that the government listens — not just with their ears, but with their conscience and find a better solution.

Outcry over new 'autocratic' booking system at Margao's Ravindra Bhavan

Team Herald

MARGAO: Former member of the State Cultural Development Committee, Vishal Pai Cacode, has raised serious concerns over recent changes in the venue booking process at Ravindra Bhavan, Margao, describing it as an alarming shift towards centralised and undemocratic control.

What was once a simple, public-friendly system has reportedly been replaced by a bureaucratic bottleneck that now requires personal approval from Chairman Rajendra Talak for every booking.

According to Pai Cacode, this change undermines the ethos of Ravindra Bhavan as a cultural hub meant to serve the public.

"No event can move for-

ward without the Chairman's green signal. This reduces a cultural institution to a one-man show. It's not administration — it's dictatorship in disguise

— Vishal Pai Cacode, artist

ward without the Chairman's green signal," said Pai Cacode. "This reduces a cultural institution to a one-man show. It's not administration — it's dictatorship in disguise."

He emphasised that permissions for cultural events should be granted through transparent administrative procedures, not personal discretion. The new setup, he warned, risks turning a

democratic space for artistic expression into a vehicle for ego-driven control.

"I strongly condemn this shift. The process must be rooted in policy and fairness, not subject to an individual's whims," he said. "The new Member Secretary must urgently red-flag this misuse of authority."

Pai Cacode also highlighted the broader implications, noting that such centralisation causes delays, discourages organisers, and ultimately defeats the purpose of a publicly funded institution.

"Artists, event organisers, and the public deserve a system that is efficient, impartial, and welcoming — not one entangled in red tape and personal approvals," he said.

NGO says panchayats can block mega projects, accuse them of passing the buck to TCP

Counters claim that local bodies are powerless if TCP grants permission first, says they must verify ground reality as the licensing authority before granting approvals

Team Herald

MARGAO: As mega real estate projects continue to face stiff resistance from residents at Gram Sabhas across Goa, a growing number of voices are challenging the oft-repeated claim by panchayats that they are powerless to stop these developments.

While elected panchayat members have routinely said their hands are tied once permissions are issued by the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Department or Planning and Development Authorities (PDAs), activists and former officials argue that panchayats do have the authority—and responsibility—to act.

Citizen for Democracy member and former bu-

“Panchayats must check the authenticity of the claims made by developers. If anything is found to be misrepresented, they can and should reject the project. Even the government sometimes portrays the panchayats as powerless, but the law actually empowers them to act in the interest of the village

—Elvis Gomes, member, Citizens For Democracy

reaucrat Elvis Gomes has strongly countered the narrative that panchayats are merely rubber-stamping authorities. He pointed out that while TCP permissions are granted on technical grounds, it is the responsibility of the panchayat, the licensing authority, to conduct thorough on-site verification and ensure that the project complies with ground realities.

"There is a tendency for panchayats to shift the blame to the TCP and

PDAs," Gomes said. "But in reality, panchayats have powers to stop these projects if due diligence reveals any discrepancies or violations."

Citing examples of misrepresentation in project paperwork, Gomes highlighted how in one case, a nullah passing through the property, was omitted from survey plans submitted by builders to secure approvals. "The project still received clearance because no one verified the

actual site conditions. This is a case fit for vigilance," he said.

Gomes maintained that the panchayat's role goes beyond just forwarding files and granting licenses. "They must check the authenticity of the claims made by developers. If anything is found to be misrepresented, they can and should reject the project," he stressed.

This sentiment echoes the growing frustration at the grassroots level. Over the past few months, Gram Sabhas in various villages have passed resolutions demanding a carrying capacity study to assess whether their areas can sustain further development. These resolutions are seen as a way for villagers to provide

their panchayats with legal grounds to refuse permissions based on resource exhaustion.

According to Gomes, such resolutions should not be treated as symbolic. "The mood of the Gram Sabha matters. Their voice should be respected. Even the government sometimes portrays the panchayats as powerless, but the law actually empowers them to act in the interest of the village," he said.

He further added that panchayats must be able to demonstrate that they have done their due diligence before clearing any file. "And if they haven't, Gram Sabha members are well within their rights to question and hold them accountable," he concluded.

South Goa ZP raises alarm over PWD circular allowing low-cost bids

Team Herald

MARGAO: In The South Goa Zilla Panchayat (ZP) has raised serious concerns over a circular issued by the Public Works Department (PWD) that permits acceptance of bids quoting more than 20% below the estimated cost for public works.

At a meeting held on Friday, chaired by Zilla Panchayat President Sanjana Velip, members expressed apprehension that this revised policy could compromise the quality and timely completion of government projects.

Speaking to the media after the meeting, Velip and Vice-Chairman Siddharth Desai said several members had objected to the circular. Previously, bids quoting over 20% below the estimated cost were rejected to ensure quality standards. Under the new directive, however, such bids are now

being allowed.

"This change increases the risk of poor-quality work and incomplete projects. Contractors may later find the work financially unviable and abandon it midway," Velip warned.

Former Chairperson Suvarna Tendulkar added that the Zilla Panchayat is authorised to carry out works up to Rs 15 lakh. "Even for such small-scale works, accepting bids below 20% is risky and could affect project viability," she said.

Members unanimously agreed to send a letter to the state government urging reconsideration of the circular.

Other key issues were also discussed. Velip clarified that although some funds appear unspent, they are tied to bills for completed works still in process. Members noted that several projects under the 15th Finance Commission have yet

to be uploaded and stressed the need to complete all pending works.

It was informed that 11 work files have been processed and tenders for these will be floated next week.

Meanwhile, construction of the new Zilla Panchayat building remains on hold, as the earlier identified site lacked adequate parking and infrastructure. A new location is yet to be finalised.

The meeting also highlighted a shortage of junior engineers. Of the five sanctioned posts, only one is a full-time appointment, while the remaining four are stretched across two locations. This has led to delays in bill processing and oversight of works.

Members demanded the appointment of four full-time junior engineers to ensure efficient implementation of development projects.