

# AAP HITS STREETS, ACCUSES BJP OF MASSIVE 'CORRUPTION'

Protest led by MLAs Venzy Viegas and Cruz Silva sees fiery rhetoric

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), led by MLAs Venzy Viegas and Engr Cruz Silva, staged a high-voltage protest against the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Goa, levelling serious allegations of corruption, mis-governance, and betrayal of public trust.

Carrying placards and chanting slogans, AAP volunteers marched with a symbolic 12-headed effigy of Ravan, with each head representing a member of the BJP Cabinet, including Chief Minister Pramod Sawant. According to AAP, the effigy symbolised the government's betrayal of the Goan people.

The protest march began at Azad Maidan and was headed toward the BJP office, but was stopped by authorities at the Corporation



of the City of Panaji (CCP) crossing.

Speaking to the media, MLA Venzy Viegas said, "This protest is against bad governance. Just as our forefathers fought to liberate Goa from Portuguese rule, it's time to launch a revolution against today's corrupt regime."

Viegas hit out at the BJP for scrapping the free water scheme, accusing the government of copying

the Delhi model without commitment or understanding. "We had warned that they were not serious. Now they've withdrawn the scheme with no accountability. Copying requires intelligence, which they clearly lack," he remarked.

MLA Cruz Silva said the current state of governance was the worst Goa has seen since Liberation. "Freedom fighters gave their lives for dignity, justice, and good

governance—not scams and repression. This government is destroying Goa's land, culture, and identity."

AAP leader Amit Palekar criticised CM Sawant's claim that Goans were misusing the water scheme by installing extra meters. "Even if 50,000 families misused it, the loss is barely Rs 6 crore—nothing compared to the crores spent on BJP's 2022 swearing-in ceremony. Instead of targeting misuse, the CM scrapped the whole scheme and insulted Goans by calling them thieves," Palekar said.

Valmiki Naik, another senior AAP leader, alleged that the BJP government had looted over Rs 10,000 crore through scams ranging from recruitment fraud to land grabs. "Yet, they cancelled free water and called citizens thieves. The real thieves are in the Cabinet," he declared.

# Taxi operators slam govt over 'authoritarian' curbs on public dissent

Cabbies say police stopped peaceful submission of objections against aggregator app; calls move undemocratic

Team Herald

PANJIM: The All Goa Tourist Taxi Operators Association on Wednesday accused the BJP-led State government of adopting authoritarian measures to stifle public dissent, after police blocked a peaceful gathering meant for submitting objections to the newly proposed transport aggregator guidelines.

Speaking to reporters, Association representative Sunil Naik said, "We've come here before, following the government's call for suggestions and objections. So we told our members to submit their views. But instead, the authorities imposed Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNS), restricting public assembly."

Naik questioned the logic behind the move. "If the government in-

**"If the government invites objections but then deploys police to stop us from gathering, what are we supposed to do? We came to submit objections—not to protest. We appeal to the public and fellow taxi operators—if you are against the aggregator app, come forward and submit your objections,"** — Sunil Naik, Association representative

invites objections but then deploys police to stop us from gathering, what are we supposed to do? We came to submit objections—not to protest. We appeal to the public and fellow taxi operators—if you are against the aggregator app, come forward and submit your objections," he urged.

The North Goa District Magistrate had earlier imposed prohibitory orders around Junta House under Section 163 of the BNS, 2023. The directive, prompted by intelligence reports about a possible protest involving over 2,000 taxi operators, banned the assembly of five or more persons, processions, and demonstrations in the Panaji Police

Station area. The order also prohibited the carrying of sticks, placards, banners, loudspeakers, or any objects that could support unlawful assembly.

June 19 marked the final day for stakeholders to submit objections and suggestions to the draft guidelines, issued on May 20 with a one-month response period.

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## GARBAGE GLUT



Rotting fruits and vegetables, fish guts, and other waste have been left uncollected at Mapusa market for weeks. The decomposing pile next to the fish-cutting section emits a stomach-turning stench and is teeming with flies, pests, and maggots. While the FDA cracks down on unhygienic restaurants, why is it blind to the appalling state of Goa's wet markets?

## Traders to shut Mapusa market on Monday to protest sanitation fee hike

MAPUSA: The Mapusa Traders Association has announced a market bandh on Monday, June 23, to protest the hike in sanitation fees imposed by the Mapusa Municipal Council. The decision was taken during the Association's general body meeting on Wednesday.

Traders alleged that the municipality has been charging exorbitant sanitation and garbage fees, retroactively from 2021, at the time of trade licence renewal.

Mapusa Councillor Adv Shashank Narvekar clarified that the Council had revoked the resolution to levy sanitation fees in its last ordinary meeting, as the charges had

not been officially discussed or approved.

"In 2021, the government issued a circular directing municipal bodies to implement Garbage Management Rules and Bylaws. While the Mapusa Council adopted these rules in 2023, no action was taken until auditors flagged the non-collection of garbage and sanitation fees," Narvekar said.

He added that during Chief Minister Pramod Sawant's recent visit to Mapusa, councillors raised the issue, following which the CM verbally directed the Chief Officer not to levy the fees. However, in the absence of written instructions, the Chief Officer has continued imposing the charges, angering the trader community.

"How can the Chief Officer impose these fees when we have already revoked the resolution?" Narvekar asked, while extending his support to the traders' decision to shut down the market on Monday.

## Cops crack down on peddlers near colleges

Team Herald

PANJIM: In a crackdown on drug activities around educational institutions, police in North Goa have arrested two individuals for allegedly attempting to peddle ganja to students.

On June 16, Pernem Police apprehended 28-year-old Shivanand Gawade of Parcem and seized 732 grams of ganja, valued at approximately ₹70,000. The narcotics were concealed in the dickey of his scooter near the Tuem Garbage Treatment Plant.

In a separate incident, Bicholim Police arrested 19-year-old Harshadeep Ghanekar from Poiria, Mayem, during the early hours of June 18. He was found with 29 grams of suspected ganja, worth Rs 2,900, near the Shirgao Railway tracks.

# CM urges local youth to take up private jobs

Says Goans need to change mindset when it comes to employment

Team Herald

PANJIM: Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Wednesday called on Goan youth to actively seek private sector jobs, warning that a continued reluctance could result in greater migration of workers from other states into Goa.

Addressing reporters at Mantralaya after chairing a high-level meeting with key industry stakeholders, Sawant said, "Goans must change their mindset. If locals do not seize available job opportunities, migration into the state will only increase in the future."

He assured that the government would not tolerate labour exploitation and announced an upcoming drive to identify and curb such practices. "We are committed to protecting the rights of workers and ensuring

**"We are committed to protecting the rights of workers and ensuring fair treatment across all sectors"** — Pramod Sawant, Chief Minister

fair treatment across all sectors," he said.

The Chief Minister also said the government is considering extending the current work experience requirement—applicable to Lower Division Clerk (LDC) and Multi-Tasking Staff (MTS) positions—to other government posts. Additionally, efforts are underway to partner with institutions to support on-the-job educational advancement.

As part of a broader upskilling initiative, ITI-certified individuals with two years of relevant experience will soon be eligible to

take exams to upgrade their qualifications to a diploma in engineering. More such programmes will be rolled out in the near future.

Sawant further announced that beginning July 1, the government will implement 16 welfare schemes for construction workers, backed by the Rs 600 crore Labour Welfare Fund. A review meeting will be held two months after the launch to assess the impact of the schemes.

The meeting was attended by senior government officials and representatives from key sectors including pharmaceuticals, shipping, tourism, automobiles, and services. Discussions centered on aligning Goa's workforce with evolving industry needs.

Proposals included launching a Labour Welfare Portal for transparent

delivery of benefits, promoting local contractors, deploying GHRDC staff for security and housekeeping roles, and enforcing wage payment compliance.

The CM also pledged to address the transport concerns of industries and urged them not to hire contractors from outside Goa. Other proposals included industry-specific training programmes, streamlined recruitment through shared candidate databases, implementation of Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), and promoting employment in emerging sectors.

Revisions to minimum wages for highly skilled workers and solutions for transportation issues faced by rural workers commuting to industrial hubs were also key topics of discussion.

# Casteist remark case: High Court cites lack of public view, acquits two women

Court finds no ground to interfere with Sessions Court order

Team Herald

PANJIM: The High Court of Bombay at Goa has upheld the discharge of two women—including a Police Inspector—by a Sessions Court in a case filed under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. The ruling came while dismissing a revision petition filed by the State challenging their discharge.

The case stemmed from a 2020 complaint by a woman from Ponda taluka, who

**The State, through the Crime Branch, had argued that caste-based abuses were hurled at the complainant, whose surname was "Gawade" and not "Gaudi", and cited witness statements to support its claim**

alleged that her two sisters-in-law, during a domestic dispute, used the surname "Gawade" in a casteist manner. One of the accused is currently serving as a Police Inspector.

The State, through the Crime Branch, had argued that caste-based abuses were hurled at the complainant, whose surname

was "Gawade" and not "Gaudi", and cited witness statements to support its claim. However, Justice Valmiki Menezes found no error in the lower court's discharge order, noting the absence of "public view"—a key criterion under Sections 3(1)(r) and 3(1)(s) of the SC/ST Act.

Quoting a 2023 Supreme

Court ruling, Justice Menezes said that no independent public witnesses were produced to substantiate the claim that the alleged casteist remarks were made in public.

The State was represented by Additional Public Prosecutor Pravin Faldesai. Senior Advocate Carlos Alvares Ferreira, along with Advocates Nehal Govekar, Sujay Kamulkar, and Rakesh Naik, appeared for the accused.

Reacting to the order,

former MLA and lawyer Radharao Gracias noted that the word "Gawade" is commonly used in Goa and interpretation depends on mens rea (intent) and context. "If the word is used casually or in reference to a surname, the benefit of doubt lies with the accused," he said.

United Tribal Associations' Alliance (UTTA) president Prakash Velip declined to comment, stating only that intent matters in such cases.

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