

With GFP's move, all eyes now on Margao civic chessboard

Vijai Sardesai plans foray into Digambar Kamat's stronghold, redrawing battle lines in 2027 Assembly poll run-up

Team Herald

MARGAO: The political landscape of Margao is witnessing a significant recalibration after Goa Forward Party (GFP) President Vijai Sardesai recently announced his intention to contest the upcoming municipal elections from Margao and Curtorim too, marking a dramatic shift from the alliance dynamics that previously governed the Margao Municipal Council (MMC).

This strategic manoeuvre carries profound implications for the current BJP-backed administration, which assumed control following the collapse of the earlier GFP-Congress partnership that had once dominated municipal politics in



Vijai Sardesai

the commercial capital. Sardesai's public declaration comes at a time when the BJP has firm control over the municipal administration through its supported panels across both Margao and Fatorda constituencies as well as at Curtorim. Political observers suggest this timing is deliberate, aimed at establishing early ground presence before the electoral campaign intensifies.

The dynamics fundamen-



Digambar Kamat

tally changed when former Congress Margao MLA Digambar Kamat defected to the BJP in mid-September 2022. Kamat-backed Damodar (Damu) Shirodkar became MMC Chairperson in October 2022, supported by BJP councillors, including former GFP councillors from Fatorda who also joined the ruling party. The Fatorda group of GFP councillors have since been in opposition within the

“GFP will need to win at least two-three seats from Margao constituency's municipal area to have any realistic chance of forming the council”

— A political observer

“A three-way contest (among BJP, Congress and GFP) could significantly alter seat calculations, particularly if voting patterns fragment along constituency lines

— A political commentator

council body.

Political observers note that the numbers game poses a significant hurdle for GFP. Even sweeping all the 11 wards in Fatorda constituency would leave Sardesai short of the 13 seats needed for council formation to gain majority in the 25-member civic body.

“GFP will need to win at least two-three seats from

Margao constituency's municipal area to have any realistic chance of forming the council,” remarked a political observer, highlighting the direct challenge to the established BJP network in Kamat's traditional stronghold.

The current arrangement represents a stark departure from previous cycles.

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CBSE Class-10 board exams twice a year from 2026

PTI, NEW DELHI: From 2026, Class-10 students will be able to take CBSE board exams twice in an academic session but it will be mandatory for them to appear for the first phase in February, officials said on Wednesday.

The second phase scheduled in May will be optional for students who wish to improve their performance. In case a student appears for both the phases, the best score of the two will be retained, they said.

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has approved the norms for conducting board exams twice a year for Class-10, a move recommended in the new National Education Policy (NEP).

“The first phase will be conducted in February and second in May. The results for the two phases will be announced in April and June, respectively,” CBSE Examination Controller Sanyam Bhardwaj said.

“It will be mandatory (for students) to appear for the first phase while the second phase will be optional. Students will be allowed to improve their performance in any three subjects out of science, mathematics, social science and languages,” he added.

Explaining the rationale behind making the first phase mandatory for the students, CBSE Chairman Rahul Singh said it is being done to ensure that students take the exams seriously and the sanctity of the board exams is maintained.

“If a student does not appear for three or more subjects in the first examination, he or she will not be allowed to appear for the second exam. Such students will be placed in the ‘Essential Repeat’ category and can take the examination only next year in the main exam in February,” he said.

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Patto's roads sink at the first sign of rain

Waterlogging, sewage overflow and foul stench plague Panjim's business hub year after year



Traffic navigates through the flooded streets of Patto, Panjim on Wednesday

Team Herald

PANJIM: Four years after Corporation of the City of Panaji (CCP) Mayor Rohit Monserrate promised a permanent solution to Patto's persistent waterlogging problems, the situation remains unchanged. Despite being one of the core areas of the so-called Smart City, Patto continues to suffer severe flooding at the slightest hint of rain.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, the rainfall was far from intense — yet the roads in this vital commercial and administra-

tive hub were submerged, causing traffic jams and significant inconvenience to visitors and office-goers alike.

Patto, once developed by the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) to shift government offices and de-congest the city, had to be sold off to private corporates after EDC faced financial trouble. Once seen as a prestigious enclave, it has since fallen into neglect — plagued by congested roads, poor drainage and deteriorating infrastructure.

To make matters worse, sewage frequently overflows from the

drains, releasing a foul stench that fills the air. Pedestrians often have to cover their noses as they pass through the area.

Residents say the waterlogging has become hazardous, with frequent incidents of people falling off two-wheelers while navigating through knee-deep water.

“It's shocking,” said a local resident, “that while the government proudly promotes Panjim as a smart city, one of its most important zones is left neglected and constantly flooded.”

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Indian origin Mamdani wins NYC mayoral primary

PTI, NEW YORK: In a stunning victory, Indian-American law maker Zohran Kwame Mamdani defeated former governor Andrew Cuomo in the Democratic primary race for New York City mayor.

Mamdani, son of renowned Indian filmmaker Mira Nair and Mahmood Mamdani, a Ugandan author of Indian ancestry, was declared victorious in the Democratic mayoral primary Tuesday night.

“In the words of Nelson Mandela: it always seems impossible until it's done. My friends, it is done. And you are the ones who did it. I am honoured to be your Democratic nominee for the Mayor of New York City,” Mamdani posted on X.

Mamdani was born in Kampala, Uganda, on October 18, 1991, and raised in New York City.

He moved to New York with his parents when he was seven. His mother Mira Nair has won applause for films like ‘Monsoon Wedding’ and ‘Salaam Bombay!’.

Mamdani, is married to Brooklyn-based Syrian-born artist Rama Duwaji.

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Shubhanshu Shukla soars into history

Becomes 2nd Indian in space, 41 years after Rakesh Sharma; spacecraft to dock at ISS today



Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla and three others aboard the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft bound for the International Space Station, on Wednesday

PTI, NEW DELHI: India's Shubhanshu Shukla scripted history by embarking on a space odyssey along with three others to the International Space Station as part of a commercial mission by Axiom Space on Wednesday, 41 years after astronaut Rakesh Sharma's spaceflight onboard a Russian spacecraft.

SpaceX's Falcon-9 rocket blasted off from the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida at 12:01 pm IST carrying the astronauts of the Axiom-4 mission towards the ISS amid cheers from watch parties organised across the world, including

at Shukla's City Montessori School in Lucknow where his parents witnessed the historic launch.

The astronauts began orbiting the Earth 10 minutes after the launch, prompting Shukla to announce India's return to human spaceflight after 41 years.

“Kamaal ki ride (It was a great ride),” Shukla said soon after the Dragon spacecraft was placed in orbit around the Earth at an altitude of 200 km. The spacecraft is expected to dock at the ISS at 4:30 pm on Thursday, capping a 28-hour journey.

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MAX. TEMP 29.8 °C
MIN. TEMP 26.1 °C

idharudhar



Shameless! No English – pick one of these!

Trigger-happy cruelty? Calls grow to clamp down on airguns after recent dog shooting incidents

SHYAM ZAMBAULIKAR

MARGAO: A spate of attacks on animals using airguns has triggered a wave of outrage from animal welfare activists, who are calling for tighter regulation and enforcement of the sale and use of these weapons. In the latest incident in Navelim, a pet dog was shot four times. Despite the existence of animal cruelty laws, such cases rarely progress beyond the initial complaint, leaving known offenders free — and often emboldened.

“If you ask me, nobody should be allowed to buy an airgun,” says Fidoll Pereira, an animal rescuer and activist. “People living in remote forested areas with plantations may require guns to scare off bison and other wildlife. But why does anyone in an urban area need one? To shoot birds



or dogs for sport? Our parents never required such gadgets. These weapons can maim a child or kill an animal, and they are often misused by children who don't understand their power.”

Despite the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 empowering police to act against such violence, activists argue that law enforcement rarely takes these cases seriously. “There is no will to investigate or deliver justice,” Pereira adds. “When the law itself is so mild, the police don't prioritise these crimes.”

Her frustration is echoed across the animal welfare community, who point to repeated incidents of brutality. In December 2022, a Colva man allegedly shot and killed his neighbour's cat after previously threatening to do so. The government vet conducted an autopsy and recovered buckshot from the animal's skull, but police later closed the case citing lack of evidence — the airgun was never retrieved.

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“Airguns are far too easily accessible — especially online — with no real checks on who's buying them or why. We've seen countless cases where these weapons are used not for legitimate protection of crops, but to kill birds, pigeons, even endangered species, or to target street animals out of spite. There's an urgent need for regulatory oversight. The police should maintain a comprehensive database of all airgun owners and mandate registration for every airgun in circulation, regardless of calibre. These guns may not always fall under the firearms category legally, but they can inflict serious harm — they are, in every sense, lethal weapons

— Virginia Simoes, Nuvem

“People living in remote forested areas with plantations may require guns to scare off bison and other wildlife. But why does anyone in an urban area need one? To shoot birds or dogs for sport? These weapons can maim a child or kill an animal, and they are often misused by children who don't understand their power. There is little that can be done after the fact. When the laws governing animal cruelty are so mild, the police don't prioritise these crimes

— Fidoll Pereira, Majorda