## O HERALDO

## voice of goa

# **FARE RELIEF FOR WO Private sector employees to get** 50% concession on bus travel

'Mhaji Bus' scheme aims to ease commute costs and boost women's employment

#### **Team Herald**

BICHOLIM: The State government is considering a proposal to offer a 50 per cent concession on bus fares for women employed in the private sector, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant announced on Saturday.

Sawant was speaking at the launch of the 'Mhaji Bus' Scheme 2025 and the disbursement of fuel and insurance subsidies for Bicholim and Sattari talukas at Ravindra Bhavan, Sankhali. Transport Minister Mauvin Godinho and KTCL Chairman and MLA Ulhas Tuenkar were also present.

Sawant said the initiative is aimed at enhancing affordability for daily commuters while encouraging more women to take up



jobs in the private sector by cluding services provided reducing their commuting by private bus operators. To ensure a smooth rollout, the expenses. The fare concession will

State government is workbe applicable to all buses ing closely with private opoperating within Goa, inerators, offering subsidies

### **REVISED 'MHAJI BUS' SCHEME**

An operational subsidy of Rs 3 per km for private bus operators (approximately Rs 2.2 lakh annual income per bus) Rs 10 lakh one-time grant for

replacing old buses ♦ 50% insurance premium

reimbursement Free ticketing machines and KTCL smart card support

Real-time tracking through the 'Bus' On The Go' app Direct fare collection by operators Overnment advertisement revenue and branding support for private bus owners

> and operational incentives to strengthen public transport, particularly in rural and underserved areas, the chief minister said. By lowering travel costs,

## the government hopes to

**Team Herald** 

eliminate a key barrier to employment for women. thereby supporting greater access to job opportunities and reinforcing their contribution to Goa's economic "This is a big step towards

modern, inclusive, and self-reliant public transport in Goa," said Sawant. On the occasion, the Chief

development.

Minister also disbursed pending fuel subsidies to bus operators from Bicholim and Sattari talukas. Earlier, the All-Goa Private Bus Owners Association had rejected the 'Mhaji Bus' scheme until the government released the pending fuel subsidy, amounting to approximately Rs 20 lakh, which was due from

July 2018 to March 2019.

PONDA: Even as last year's cash-for-government-job scam rocked Ponda and other parts of Goa, a similar incident has come to light this year, with several residents of Usgao and Dharbandora allegedly cheated of nearly Rs 80 lakh by a contractor.

According to reports, the contractor approached several individuals who had purchased plots in Usgao and Dharbandora for house construction. Claiming to undertake the construction of their houses, he accepted large sums of money in advance from the plot owners, based on either verbal assurances or formal agreements.

"Trusting that he would build the house as promised, many plot owners gave him

Trusting that he would build the house as promised, many plot owners gave him money in advance towards the fixed construction cost. However, over the past two years, the contractor is alleged to have done little more than dig foundations and bring a limited amount of construction material to the sites - Complainant

money in advance towards he had given Rs 9 lakh in adthe fixed construction cost," said one of the complainants. However, over the past two years, the contractor is alleged to have done little more than dig foundations and bring a limited amount of construction material to the sites.

Contractor accused of

cheating Usgao, Dharbandora

locals of Rs 80 lakh

Victims allege incomplete construction despite

hefty advance payments; Ponda police term it a

civil dispute as victims seek justice

Frustrated by the lack of progress and alleged fraud, those who had entrusted him with lakhs of rupees gathered at the Ponda Police Station and lodged a complaint. One plot owner claimed

vance, another said he paid Rs 30 lakh, while others stated they had handed over up to fifty percent of the agreed house construction cost. In some cases, written agreements were signed; in others, the transactions were purely based on verbal trust. Now, the contractor is re-

portedly telling victims to go to court to recover their money. When contacted, a Pon-

da Police official remarked that the matter appeared to be civil in nature.

## BJP chief hits back at Gaude, denies making random statements

#### **Team Herald**

**PANJIM**: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) State President Damu Naik on Saturday refuted former Minister and MLA Govind Gaude's claims that random statements were made by him regarding the action taken against Gaude.

spoken to Gaude and met

him at the party office in

Margao before making any

Minister. Responding to Gaude's remarks made during an interview with a local channel, Naik stated that he had

public statements. He asserted that the party had followed due process, issued disciplinary instructions, and given Gaude an opportunity to explain his stand after he made allegations of corruption in the Tribal Welfare Department, which is under the Chief

cision to drop Gaude from the Cabinet was taken by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, adding that Gaude should refrain from politicising the issue needlessly.



Workers continue plastering a wall in the rain near Don Bosco, Panjim, even after the Smart City project deadline has expired, as truckloads of sand and construction materials remain strewn along the roadside

## Panjim market fire safety system in shambles, inspection reveals

## 400 vendors, thousands of shoppers left vulnerable due to neglected fire systems

**Team Herald** 

past eight years. The current delay in A CCP engineer stated that the Correport submission appears to reflect poration had initiated standard pro-

## Kala Academy repairs under fire from artistes' group



DGCA must name airlines and airports with safety lapses, demands Trajano

#### **Team Herald**

PANJIM: Political analyst Trajano D'Mello has called on the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to reveal the names of airlines and airports where safety lapses were found following the recent Air India flight incident.

In the wake of the June 12 Ahmedabad–London-bound Air India flight crash, the DGCA issued an order on June 19, 2025, initiating a focused assessment of the aviation ecosystem. While the DGCA listed several shortcomings identified during its surveillance, it failed to name the specific airports or aircraft involved.

"This lack of transparency puts the lives of passengers at risk in order to protect the profit interests of both the airlines and the airports," Trajano stated, criticising the DGCA's decision to withhold key information.

He also raised alarm over the condition of Dabolim Airport, saying it is "sitting on a ticking time bomb," with no clarity on when disaster might strike. Citing a High Court order, Trajano alleged that the panchayat minister was involved in a decision-making process that ignored Indian Navy guidelines regarding highrise buildings, thus flouting height regulations and endangering aircraft operating from the Dabolim facility.

He referred to a letter dated 7 May 2018, issued by the Navy authorities to the Chief Secretary and other government departments, which warned: "All the above buildings provide uninterrupted view of the Naval Air Station and operation area of Dabolim airport and could be used by inimical elements to gather valuable intelligence, which would be severely detrimental to national and civil aviation security."

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Naik further said the de-

CALANGUTE: The report on the inspection of fire-fighting equipment at the Panjim market is expected to be submitted to the Corporation of the City of Panjim (CCP) sometime next week, following a long-overdue review that exposed a total failure of critical fire safety infrastructure.

The inspection, conducted on June 16 by the Directorate of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES), was prompted by a sustained campaign by this newspaper, which brought to light that no safety checks had been carried out on the equipment for the

the broader pattern of administrative sluggishness displayed by both the CCP and the fire brigade in addressing vital public safety concerns.

The findings have raised serious concerns, especially given that an estimated 7,000 people visit the market daily. The inspection revealed that essential fire-fighting apparatus - including fire pumps, hydrants, smoke extractors, and hoses — are non-functional. The compromised state of the system leaves thousands of vendors and shoppers vulnerable in the event of a fire.

tificate (NOC) from the Na-

tional Highways Authority

of India (NHAI); Structural

The residents asserted

that the continued exist-

ence of such hoardings

constitutes a violation of

the Right to Life under Ar-

ticle 21 of the Constitution

of India and the Right to

Copies of the complaint

have also been submitted to

the Disaster Management

Authority at the Office of

the North Goa Collector in

Panjim and to the Calan-

gute village panchayat.

Planned Development.

cedures in such situations. He added that a fire safety consultant would be appointed following the report's submission. "The budget will be approved once the report is submitted. The consultant will then prepare an estimate, and a tender for the work will be floated accordingly," he said.

The market, which houses approximately 400 vendors, was described by DFES as a "sitting duck" due to the inoperative fire-fighting system. A DFES officer urged the CCP to take the matter seriously and to act with urgency to address the identified fire hazards.

## Calangute locals issue ultimatum over illegal hoardings



#### **Team Herald**

**PANJIM**: Taking serious note of a large hoarding collapsing on the Calangute-Nagoa-Parra road, residents of Calangute have issued a three-day ultimatum to the authorities to dismantle all 'illegal' hoardings in the area. Failing compliance, they have warned they will be constrained to approach the High Court of Bombay at Goa for redressal.

In a letter addressed to the Mapusa Deputy Collector and the Disaster Management Authority, residents Manuel Cardozo, Clothildes da Silva e Braganca, and Anthony Cruz de Souza raised alarm over the illegal erection

of hoardings above main public roads within the jurisdiction of the Calangute village panchayat.

stability/liability certificates The residents have subfrom registered architects; mitted photographs and Technical clearance from the specific location details of Town and Country Planning these hoardings and bill-(TCP) Department; Valid boards, highlighting the poconstruction licences from tential threat they pose. the local authority.

They warned that such structures would not withstand strong or gusty winds, potentially leading to a manmade disaster. The hoardings, they said, endanger the lives and safety of villagers, pedestrians, tourists, motor-

ists, and vehicles. The letter further noted that these hoardings lack several mandatory permissions: Approval from the Public Works Department (PWD); No Objection Cer-

### North Goa police address public grievances

#### Team Herald

PANJIM: In a continued effort to address public grievances, the North Goa Police on Saturday heard 28 petitioners and 91 individuals, issuing necessary directions to enquiry officers to ensure prompt redressal of complaints.

The public grievances meetings were conducted at various police stations, with Superintendent of Police (North) Rahul Gupta, IPS, presiding over proceedings at Colvale Police Station. DySP Sudesh Naik oversaw the meeting at Panjim Police Station, DySP Wilson D'Souza at Valpoi, DySP Shaikh Salim at Pernem, and DySP Vishwesh Karpe at Saligao.

Last week, similar redressal meetings were held at Bicholim, Agacaim, Anjuna, Mopa Airport and Calangute police stations. During those sessions, police addressed 33 petitioners and 81 individuals, with Anjuna PS highest —15 petitioners and 26 individuals.

#### **Team Herald**

PANJIM: Members of the Kala Rakhonn Maand staged a protest on Friday outside the PWD Head Office at Altinho, demanding a comprehensive structural audit of the ongoing repair works at the Kala Academy building.

Protesters voiced serious concerns about the quality and transparency of the restoration project, urging authorities to preserve the iconic cultural complex through proper technical evaluation.

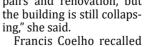
Following a meeting with PWD Principal Chief Engineer Uttam Parsekar, Kala Rakhonn Maand convenor Devidas Amonkar stated that the group had still not received the information and documents they had previously requested. He added that artistes performing at the Kala Academy continued to face several problems, with the black

box theatre, art gallery, and open-air auditorium all in need of urgent repairs. "We are not satisfied

with the reply of the PWD engineers. We will not stop for the next three days," Amonkar said.

Cecille Rodrigues noted that the air-conditioning at Kala Academy was not functional, and guitar classes had been relocated

above the indoor hall. "We have requested the PWD Principal Chief Engineer to visit the Kala Academy premises, as artistes, students, members of the public, and music teachers are all suffering. The government has spent crores of rupees on structural repairs and renovation, but



that at the first Task Force meeting, members had asked for certain documents, which the PWD had still not provided. "But when we met the PWD Principal Chief Engineer, he assured us that the documents would be given. During the meeting, the Chief Minister had directed the PWD engineers to provide the documents to the Task Force members," he said.

Coelho explained that the Task Force had requested documents relating to structural repairs, renovation works, and the structural audit of Kala Academy as early as October last year. "It was only in March this year that the PWD initiated the process to conduct a structural audit at a cost of Rs 80 crore. We want to know why the work was not tendered and instead awarded on a nomination basis," he added.

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