# 25 killed in blaze at nightclub in India's Goa state

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NEW DELHI — A fire ripped through a popular nightclub in India's Goa state, killing 25 people, including tourists, the state's chief minister said Sunday.

The blaze occurred just past midnight in Arpora village in North Goa, a party hub about 15 miles from the state capital, Panaji.

Goa's chief minister, Pramod Sawant, said most of the dead were the club's kitchen workers, as well as three or four tourists. Six people were injured and are stable, he said. All the bodies have been recovered.

The fire was caused by a gas cylinder blast and has been extinguished, the Press Trust of India news agency reported, quoting police. Witnesses told the news agency that the fire began on the club's first floor, where nearly 100 patrons, mostly tourists, were on the dance floor. In the ensuing chaos, several rushed to the kitchen below and got trapped along with staff, it said.

Fatima Shaikh said the commotion began as flames erupted, according to the news agency. "We rushed out of the club only to see that the entire structure was up in flames," she said.

The nightclub, along the Arpora River backwaters, had a narrow entry and exit that forced the firefighters to park their tankers about 1,300 feet away, delaying the efforts, the news agency said.

Sawant said the club had violated fire safety regula-



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**GOA'S** chief minister said the club had violated fire safety rules. A gas cylinder blast preceded the blaze.

tions. The state government ordered an inquiry to determine the exact cause of the fire and responsibility, he said. Authorities would take action against the club management and officials who allowed it to operate despite the violations, Sawant said.

Village council official Roshan Redkar told the Press Trust of India that authorities had earlier issued a demolition notice for the club, which didn't have a construction permit from the government, but that higher officials had rolled back the order.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a social media post called the fire "deeply saddening" and said he spoke with Sawant.

Modi said the government "is providing all possible assistance" while offering condolences to the victims' families.

Rahul Gandhi, leader of the opposition Congress party, wrote in a social media post: "This is not just an accident; it is a criminal failure of safety and governance."

He called for a transparent investigation to "fix accountability and ensure such preventable tragedies don't occur again."