

DENGUE OUTBREAK: Fisheries Dept under fire for neglecting hygiene, infrastructure at Cutbona Jetty

Authorities scramble to contain crisis; spread of cholera feared as many fishing boat labourers ill with diarrhoea; lack of toilets forces workers to relieve themselves in the open

Team Herald

MARGAO: In response to the dengue outbreak at the Cutbona Jetty, a review meeting was held on Wednesday at the South Goa District Collector to finalise both short-term and long-term measures aimed at addressing the crisis and preventing future outbreaks. One key decision was to conduct a joint inspection of the jetty, tentatively scheduled for Monday, and to consider amending State laws to ensure the welfare of the labour force at jetties, who currently do not fall under existing labour regulations.

The meeting, convened by Salcete Deputy Collector Ganesh Barve at the request of GOACAN coordinator Roland Martins, brought together government officials and

elected representatives, including Velim MLA Cruz Silva, Velim Sarpanch Veena Caradozo, Cavelossim Sarpanch Dixon Vaz, Salcete Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) Santosh Dessai, Balli Primary Health Centre (PHC) Health Officer Dr Benedita Dias, and representatives from the Fisheries Department, Labour Department, and other agencies.

During the meeting, the Velim and Cavelossim Sarpanchas shared feedback from recent inspections at the Cutbona and Mobar jetties. Dr Dias outlined the health department's efforts at Cutbona, including testing and awareness activities, and noted that many labourers have been suffering from diarrhoea, with treatment being provided accordingly. Several cases of cholera are also suspected.

MEASURES DISCUSSED

Joint inspection: of the Cutbona jetty is scheduled, with a focus on hygiene, infrastructure, and labour welfare.

Dengue isolation: Immediate isolation of suspected dengue patients was recommended

Mapping and boundaries: Mapping of the Cutbona jetty area to identify high-risk zones and clarify jurisdictional boundaries between the jetty and Velim village

Health check-ups: The Labour Department suggested physical health check-ups for all labourers entering Goa

FDA surveillance: The Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) was asked to inspect food preparation areas on boats and nearby stalls

Requisition of additional staff: The Fisheries Department's Colva office and the Balli Primary Health Centre (PHC) were urged to request additional support staff

It was also mentioned that a crew member from Cutbona, originally from Odisha, who was suspected of dying from dengue, had diarrhoea and a

high fever but succumbed before he could be tested.

The Fisheries Department faced strong criticism for its failure to maintain hygiene

and cleanliness at the jetty and for not addressing infrastructure issues, despite these concerns being raised in the Assembly by MLA Silva. Silva pointed out several problems, including inadequate toilet facilities at the jetty, forcing migrant workers to relieve themselves in open areas. He suggested that boat owner societies pay a lump sum in advance to cover the cost of using the existing toilet facilities.

Silva also questioned the purpose of the new jetty, which cannot be fully utilised due to inadequate facilities, with the jetty now being used as a dumping ground for old nets and broken boats. The Fisheries Department was further criticised by Cavelossim Sarpanch Dixon Vaz, who called for detailed data on the number of labourers



MOHIT KHARANGATE

employed at the jetty, their origins, and where they stay, suggesting that boat owners should face action if they do not provide this information.

The Labour Department suggested that physical health check-ups be conducted for labourers upon their arrival in Goa. DySP Dessai emphasised the importance of isolating suspected dengue patients immediately.

Roland Martins called on the Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) to inspect kitchens on boats and food stalls near the jetty, and he supported the Velim Sarpanch's suggestion to map the Cutbona Jetty area to identify high-risk zones and clarify jurisdictional responsibilities.

It was agreed that the Velim and Cavelossim Sarpanchas would raise these issues at

their next fortnightly meetings and write to relevant authorities, including the Deputy Collector, Fisheries Department, Health Department, and FDA, to ensure the implementation of the suggested measures. The Deputy Collector was also urged to hold another review meeting at the end of the month to assess the progress made.

The Fisheries Department's Colva office was asked to request additional staff, and the Balli PHC was asked to seek more support to tackle the outbreak. Silva also raised concerns about discrepancies between the official number of dengue cases and the actual number of cases, particularly those admitted to private hospitals. "As per rumours, there are more than 50 cases," said Silva.

GRIDLOCK NIGHTMARE

SAGUN GAWADE



Vehicles jostle for space along the Corte de Oiteiro road, with the authorities concerned paying no attention to the vehicles parked along the narrow stretch. The traffic congestion is expected to worsen during the tourist season as the narrow road leads to Panjim's popular Latin Quarter

Navelim locals protest halted garbage collection due to payment delays

Team Herald

MARGAO: On Wednesday, the residents of Navelim gathered at the panchayat office to protest the disruption of door-to-door garbage collection. The protest was sparked by the discovery that the panchayat secretary, Khushalidas Gaonkar, had halted payments to the workers responsible for collecting the garbage, leading to uncollected waste piling up in various areas under the panchayat's jurisdiction.

The issue arose when the secretary stopped payments for August. The decision, which Gaonkar attributed to "directions from higher-ups," left both villagers and the panchayat body in shock, as no specific details were provided

about who issued these instructions. This lack of clarity fuelled frustration and anger among the residents.

Following intervention from the Block Development Officer (BDO), Gaonkar agreed to release the pending payments for the labourers and the vehicle hired for garbage collection. The panchayat had been effectively managing waste collection from both educational institutions and residential areas through a contractor, employing eight workers and one vehicle to carry out the service according to a fixed schedule.

Former Sarpanch and current panch member Paul Pereira expressed deep concern over the unexpected halt in payments. He noted that the same panchayat secre-

tary had consistently released payments for the past eight months, making the sudden stoppage even more perplexing. The accumulation of uncollected garbage had led to widespread complaints from residents, and the panchayat body was dismayed by the secretary's decision.

"These labourers have been continuously working to maintain cleanliness and hygiene in our village. The non-payment of their dues has led to dissatisfaction and disrupted the essential service of door-to-door garbage collection in Navelim," said Pereira, adding that the panchayat had followed the proper procedure for appointing a contractor for garbage management services by issuing tenders.

KTC Chairman promises more buses in six months, safety measures for women

Team Herald

MARGAO: Responding to concerns about overcrowded Kadamba Transport Corporation (KTC) buses, particularly during peak hours, Ulhas Tuenkar, Chairman of KTC and Navelim MLA, assured that enhanced safety measures would be strictly implemented for girl students and other commuters.

Tuenkar acknowledged the overcrowding issue, which has raised safety concerns, especially after a recent incident in Margao where a girl student faced sexual harassment on an overcrowded bus. He emphasised that steps would be taken to prioritise the safety of female commuters and senior citizens on KTC buses.

"Yes, the issue has been brought to my attention, and we will ensure that preference is given to female commuters and senior citizens on KTC buses," Tuenkar stated, adding that a shortage of KTC buses has

exacerbated the problem. However, he assured that more buses would be introduced within the next six months, and all necessary safety measures would be implemented.

Velim MLA Cruz Silva also highlighted the issue, urging CM Pramod Sawant to introduce an additional bus service from the KTC bus stand to Fr Agnel Ashram-Verna. Silva, who witnessed the overcrowding firsthand, stressed the difficulties faced by students from Carmel College, Fr Agnel College, and Padre Conceicao College due to inadequate transport facilities.

"It has come to our notice that students are facing significant difficulties due to the lack of transport from the KTC Margao bus stand to Verna," Silva stated. He proposed arranging extra bus trips between 8.30 am and 9 am to alleviate the overcrowding, which he believes would significantly improve the situation for students and other commuters.

Nuven villagers oversee inspection of NH 66, push for denotification of busy stretch

Team Herald

MARGAO: An inspection was conducted on Wednesday morning along the stretch from Fr Agnel Institute in Verna to Carmel College in Nuven as the controversy over the proposed expansion of National Highway 66 continues to escalate. Local villagers, along with community leaders, have raised strong objections to the highway expansion, questioning its necessity and potential impact.

"Highway authorities are not able to justify the expansion and are on the back foot as the expansion is not leading to any joining of major road," stated Nuven Congress functionary Everson Vales. He added that the Traffic De-



partment had identified "black spots" in the area back in 2019-20.

"However, since traffic has since been shifted to the Western Bypass, these black spots have become irrelevant, and the department plans to submit a report reflecting this change," Vales added.

The current proposal to widen this section of NH 66 has faced pushback from residents and local stakeholders who argue that the expansion could cause safety risks

and disrupt existing infrastructure. The road in question is lined with numerous educational institutions, and further expansion could endanger students and residents walking along the stretch.

Last week, responding to these growing concerns, South Goa Member of Parliament (MP) Captain Viriato Fernandes held a meeting in Margao to discuss the issue. At the meeting, which was attended by Nuven residents too, the

participants emphasised that the existing Western Bypass is already designed to handle heavy traffic, rendering further expansion of the current road unnecessary. Authorities, including the Assistant Director of Transport, Executive Engineers of Highways, the Collector, and the Additional Collector, had then assured those present that a joint site inspection would be conducted to evaluate the situation.

The inspection is a follow-up to these discussions. Residents have long argued that widening the highway could lead to more speeding vehicles and potential accidents while also impacting utilities like electricity cables, telecommunication lines, and water pipelines.

GKF calls on CM to introduce Romi Konkani in schools, warns of language decline without govt support

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Global Konkani Forum (GKF) has called on Chief Minister Pramod Sawant to 'rise above petty politics' and show statesmanship by supporting the introduction of Roman Konkani in schools and granting it equal status alongside Devanagari in the Official Language Act (OLA).

Kennedy Afonso, President of GKF, announced that the forum plans to meet with the Chief Minister and all MLAs to present a draft of the official language amendment Bill. This Bill seeks to grant Roman script equal status with Devanagari in the OLA and propose a phased introduction of Roman Konkani in school curriculums from grades I to X.

Afonso highlighted that during the 25th anniversa-

The GKF believes that the absence of Roman script Konkani in education has driven the younger generation towards English, resulting in a loss of new vocabulary in Konkani. They argue that introducing Roman Konkani in schools is crucial to preserving the language and keeping it relevant for future generations.

The forum pointed out that the new National Education Policy (NEP) does not mandate education in a specific script or official language but instead encourages teaching in the house language, local language, or mother tongue. This flexibility, they argue, should be leveraged to support the inclusion of Roman Konkani in the education system.

ry of the Dalgado Konkani Academy in 2012, Fr Pratap Naik had presented five demands to then-Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar, one of which was the introduction of Romi Lipi as a subject in schools. Parrikar had publicly acknowledged the issue and had even drafted an ordinance to address it, although it was never implemented.

The GKF also noted that in 2016, Deputy Speaker Vishnu Surya Wagh had

advocated for the inclusion of Roman script Konkani in schools. Despite these efforts, the government has yet to act on this matter.

Afonso criticised the opposition from the Devanagari lobby, which argues that including Roman script in the OLA would fragment Konkani and weaken the growth of Devanagari. He questioned why the government is preventing the introduction of Roman

"We can understand the selfish objections raised by the Devanagari lobby, who argue that including Roman script in the Official Language Act will lead to the fragmentation of Konkani and weaken the growth of Devanagari. However, we do not understand why the Devanagari lobby, and the government are trying to prevent the introduction of Roman script in schools, thus jeopardising the survival of Roman Konkani, which is slowly but surely dying out

Kennedy Afonso, President, Global Konkani Forum

script in schools, risking the decline of Roman Konkani, which is slowly dying out.



CORPORAL PUNISHMENT: SHOULD THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT CONDUCT A REVIEW OF ALL TEACHERS?

"The Education Department should ensure that every teacher gets a constant reminder that corporal punishment is banned. Knowing is one thing, but implementation is very important. And hence for behavioural change, constant reminders are very very important.

Dr Sabina Martins, teacher

"Many teachers do not understand their role. A teacher should know discipline, forgiveness and artistry. A real teacher should have these qualities. But we see many teachers assaulting students. In the recent incident where a teacher beat the student till he bled is very bad for the future of the student. Students will get scared to go to school at this rate

Ramnath Parab, writer and poet

"Today, the right people are not in the teaching profession. Just because they have degrees, they get into teaching. Management has to examine if the candidate has liking and aptitude for teaching. Often they are selected because of recommendations. During our school days, if the teacher beats us we did not have the courage to tell our parents, since we would get more beating at home. Today, every child is protected by law. Even parents cannot beat them.

Vivek Naik, parent

"Teachers have no authority or power to beat any student, every teacher should understand this. If they beat students, it's criminal. At that tender age, this kind of punishment leaves scars on their future. Students at that age do not have developed mental faculties, that's why teachers have to understand them

Shivaji Desai, advocate

"Corporal punishment was banned in India from the year 2000. We are in 2024. Teachers should be role models for the students, they are not the boss of the students. Teachers are only facilitators for education. The recent incident is a condemnable offence. This shows their moral status. This way the teacher will teach only violence to students. This scar will remain with the child forever.

Auda Viegas, Bailancho Ekvott

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