

Centre sanctions Rs 750 cr to fund expansion of Margao-Cuncolim highway

Four-lane stretch will be part of the larger Mumbai-Kanyakumari corridor, which will facilitate intra-State traffic from Karnataka and Maharashtra; reduce traffic bottlenecks in Salcete

Team Herald

MARGAO: Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari has announced the approval of Rs 747 crore for the four-laning of a 7.24 km stretch of NH-66, from the end of the Margao Bypass to Cuncolim.

The project includes constructing a 4.45 km six-lane flyover to reduce traffic congestion in urban areas and will be executed under the Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM). Part of the broader Mumbai-Kanyakumari 4/6 lane corridor, this development aims to enhance connectivity between Margao and Cuncolim, while facilitating smoother intra-state travel for commuters from Karnataka and Maharashtra. Critical points on the route, including Navelim, Dramapur, Sirlim, Chinchinim, and Panzarconi, will see improvements that address traffic bottlenecks and enhance safety. The project is expected to significantly cut travel time and improve road safety by addressing accident-prone zones along the route.

Bhoma NH widening will not affect homes, temples: Union Min Gadkari

Team Herald

MARGAO: In another matter, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari addressed concerns about the National Highway 748 widening project near Bhoma, in the Lok Sabha, while responding to queries from South Goa Congress MP Viriato Fernandes. Gadkari stated that the highway expansion will be carried out along the existing alignment to minimize impact on local structures. "It has been aligned in such a way that there is bare minimum impact on the existing structures/water bodies. No religious structures are affected and the elevated structure in the built-up area has been proposed within available

Right of Way (RoW) for smooth and incident-free movement of traffic," he said.

The minister clarified that the project requires acquiring 4.53 hectares of land and has been based on a proposal submitted by the state government after local consultations. The Central government has sanctioned Rs 557 crore for constructing the 9.6-kilometer stretch from Ponda to Bhoma. Responding to Fernandes' specific queries about preserving religious structures, houses, and temple ponds, Gadkari assured that the alignment would protect local community interests while proceeding with the highway expansion.

'Extend Verna IDC elevated corridor to congested Pirnim Jn'

Team Herald

MARGAO: Concerns over traffic congestion at the Pirnim junction on the Margao-Panjim route have led to a demand for extending the proposed elevated corridor at Verna Industrial Estate to include this intersection prone to traffic snarls. Environment Minister Aleixo Sequeira, who is also the Nuvem MLA, called for the extension, along with the construction of underpasses at junctions leading to Cansaulim and Majorda villages. Sequeira emphasised that these measures are essential for ensuring smooth traffic flow on National Highway 66. The demand comes amid criticism of the current design, which stakeholders argue fails to address the choke point at Pirnim junction.

The Public Works Department (PWD) recently completed the Margao Western Bypass at a cost of Rs 482 crore, and the tender for the elevated corridor at Verna IDC has been awarded at an estimated cost of Rs 300 crore.

The issue has been a recurring topic of discussion, with members of the South Goa District Road Safety Committee recently voicing concerns over the flyover design. Ending on a slope near a petrol pump, the current design leaves the critical junction uncovered, which consumer rights activists and officials warn could exacerbate traffic snarls rather than mitigate them. In light of these concerns, the committee resolved to petition the government to revise the project.

Farmers in distress as sewage pollution paralyzes cultivation in Nuvem

For seven years, farmers here have been unable to grow their Rabi crop due to contamination of their main irrigation source, Bhogti Tollem



Team Herald

MARGAO: Farmers in Nuvem have sounded the alarm over the worsening pollution of Bhogti Tollem, a vital agricultural water source now rendered unusable due to untreated sewage inflow.

The contamination has persisted for over seven years, forcing many to abandon Rabi cultivation and eroding trust in government assurances. The farmers attribute the pollution to untreated sewage discharged from Fatorda into Bhogti Tollem, creating such an overpowering stench that sluice gates cannot be closed to store water without affecting residents.

Without the ability to harvest and store water, agriculture in the area has been paralyzed. Several visits from high-ranking officials, including two former Chief Ministers and PWD Ministers Sudin Dhavalikar and Nilesh Cabral, yielded promises of a resolution within two years. However, the failure to deliver on these commitments has deepened the frustration of the farming community. Congress leader Everson Vales, who has been vocal about the issue, criticized the government's neglect, emphasizing that the farmers are eager to resume cultivation if the problem is addressed.

We depended on this lake for irrigation. Now, with sewage contaminating it, the stench makes it impossible to use
Santu Clemente, Nuvem farmer

The farmers' plight worsened after the Salcete Mamlatdar's recent inspection of Bhogti Tollem was abruptly cancelled due to the absence of Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) officials. This sparked protests, with Vales blaming Environment Minister Aleixo Sequeira for the delay. However, Sequeira denied any involvement, stating, "I was unaware of the inspection and its cancellation. It seems political motives are behind this blame."

Sequeira said the government is monitoring sewage treatment plants in Margao and likened the situation to the clean-up of the Ganga, suggesting that rejuvenation of the River Sal, the lifeline of Salcete, is possible. Despite these assurances, the farmers remain sceptical, particularly as symbolic initiatives, such as collecting River Sal water for Republic Day celebrations in Delhi, contrast sharply with the dire realities of unchecked pollution in local water bodies.

Push for road infrastructure gains steam in Majorda, Utorda

Team Herald

MARGAO: Efforts are ramping up to address long-standing infrastructure challenges in Seraulim and nearby villages with plans for new flyovers and bridges aimed at improving connectivity and mitigating recurring issues like monsoon flooding and traffic congestion. Environment Minister Aleixo Sequeira is spearheading these initiatives in collaboration with Railways officials. During a recent meeting at the South Goa District Collectorate, he underscored the urgency of the Seraulim flyover. While land for the project was acquired by the Public Works Department (PWD) in the 1990s, Sequeira revealed that encroachments have taken over nearly half the acquired property.

Key projects include a flyover at Seraulim to resolve the seasonal closure of the railway underpass during heavy rains, a flyover at Majorda to ease vehicular movement across the railway crossing, and a pedestrian-cum-two-wheeler bridge at Utorda to provide safe access for school students whose playground lies across the railway tracks



The waterlogged Seraulim underpass during the monsoon this year (file pic)

The PWD has been instructed to conduct a detailed survey to identify encroachments and determine the project's feasibility. "The Seraulim flyover is essential not only for easing traffic but also for addressing the underpass flooding that disrupts life every

monsoon. The survey will help resolve land issues and move the project forward," Sequeira explained. At the same meeting, Sequeira urged Railways officials to expedite work on the Majorda flyover and the Utorda pedestrian-cum-two-wheeler bridge, particularly emphasizing the safety

concerns of schoolchildren in Utorda.

"This bridge will allow students safe and unhindered access to their playground," he stated. The meeting also touched on land demarcation along the Vel-

sao stretch for the double-tracking project, scheduled for December 20. This exercise is expected to resolve ownership disputes and clarify the boundaries of Railways' acquired land. "Any disputes will be resolved amicably," Sequeira assured.

In discussions with Konkani Railway officials, Sequeira advocated for a flyover to improve connectivity between Majorda, Utorda, and Calata villages, addressing regional traffic bottlenecks. Sequeira further elaborated on the history of the Seraulim underpass, noting that the PWD had initially acquired land for underpasses on both sides of the railway. However, subsequent encroachments hindered progress. He stressed that the proposed flyover would serve as a permanent solution to these recurring disruptions.

Pollution watchdog seals scrapyard in Benaullim

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) has issued a sealing notice to a scrapyard located in Pulwaddo, Benaullim, following serious environmental violations discovered during an official inspection. The scrapyard, which has been a longstanding source of concern for local residents, was found to be operating without valid environmental clearances and posing significant risks to the nearby River Sal. During an inspection conducted on Thursday GSPCB officials, accompanied by the complainant, documented multiple environmental infractions. The inspection revealed that the scrapyard was situated merely three meters from the River Sal and was disposing of solid waste and ceramic waste directly into the river. The unit had constructed a toilet with a septic tank very close to the riverbank, with bathroom water being discharged directly into the river through a pipe. The scrapyard, which collects cardboard, paper, and PET bottles from commercial establishments, operates two baling machines with capacities of 800 kg and 1200 kg. The facility employs seven to eight workers and was found to be enclosed with temporary tin sheets, lacking proper environmental safeguards.

The scrapyard, which collects cardboard, paper, and PET bottles from commercial establishments, operates two baling machines with capacities of 800 kg and 1200 kg. The facility employs seven to eight workers and was found to be enclosed with temporary tin sheets, lacking proper environmental safeguards.

Based on these findings, the GSPCB has issued a directive under Section 31(A) of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, ordering the immediate closure of the scrapyard. The notice emphasizes that the unit has failed to obtain the mandatory consent to establish or operate from GSPCB. The order has been communicated to the district collector and the Benaullim panchayat, with instructions to ensure the unit's operations are stopped and sealed with immediate effect. The GSPCB has warned that failure to comply with the no-

The River Sal, the lifeblood of Salcete and South Goa, has long been exploited by reckless polluters
Warren Alemao, complainant

tice will result in stringent legal action. This development comes in response to persistent complaints from local residents about environmental degradation and pollution of the River Sal. Local leader and complainant, Warren Alemao, described the GSPCB's action as a significant victory for the community. "The River Sal, the lifeblood of Salcete and South Goa, has long been exploited by reckless polluters," Alemao said. He credited the persistent efforts of local residents, including the Benaullim Village Panchayat and community members, for bringing attention to the scrapyard's environmental violations. "This small yet significant victory demonstrates the power of collective action and the will of the people to protect their heritage," Alemao added, emphasizing that this was just the beginning of their efforts to protect the river.

STRENGTH FROM THE DIVINE

SAGUN GAWADE



A child offers flowers to Lord Datta on the occasion of Datta Jayanti at a temple in Chincholeim-Bhatlem, Panjim, on Saturday

MAX. TEMP 35°C
MIN. TEMP 20°C

idharudhar



Psst! They're on duty... guarding the criminals

STREET VOICES
WHERE GOANS ARE HEARD

IS SULEMAN'S ESCAPE POLICE FAILURE OR POLITICAL PLOY?

Without the blessings of the higher ups – it maybe a politician or a bureaucrat or a policemen or a businessman who had contact with this type of people, this cannot happen. The constable releases an undertrial, ferries him and takes him out of the State. Does a petty police constable have so much courage to release him without the blessings of the higher-ups? That's why I'm saying this is well-planned, well-organised and well executed to safeguard the mastermind who is behind this land grabbing case. To hide the name of that person connected to the land grabbing case, this case has been propped up by getting the IRB constable involved. First they were using bouncers. Now we have hit such a low that they are using police personnel who should be protecting the people. If criminals are escaping from the custody of the Crime Branch, what remains of law and order in Goa?
Mariano Ferrao, activist

Even when there were CCTV cameras, how did a constable help the land grabbing accused Suleman Khan to escape? Were there no other constables or jail-incharge to stop constable Amit Naik? How did he get the keys to the lock-up? In this episode of Street Voices, we asked people if there are chances that the jail break may have a political hand behind it? Here are the responses.

The law and order is in a very bad state. You can see the number of crimes that are taking place in a state. And to see that somebody who has been arrested at the Crime Branch escapes with the help of a constable. Our Chief Minister who is the Home Minister has to be questioned on the same. Because if there is a convict who escapes from the Crime Branch with the help of a constable, there is a problem somewhere. Either they are frustrated with the job or they are trying to make a fast buck by helping persons who are accused to escape. This shows that this is something that Pramod Sawant is incapable of handling. He should not handle too many portfolios since an undertrial who is in custody escapes. It is a shame for the Police Department and the BJP which says that Goa is in safe hands. Goa is definitely in safe hands and culprits left, right and centre are getting away.
Cecille Rodrigues, activist

Watch Street Voices in our English news bulletins at 8 pm and the Konkani bulletin at 9 pm on Herald TV and YouTube



To watch this story on Herald TV's Youtube channel, scan this code

No power, water supply in South Goa today

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Electricity Department has announced a power shutdown on Sunday, December 15, from 7 am to 5 pm, to carry out critical maintenance work on the 220 KV Ponda-Xeldem line.

The shutdown will impact the 220 KV circuits feeding the Xeldem substation and other substations in South Goa, disrupting electricity supply to areas including Canacona, Sanguem, Quepem, and parts of Salcete, Dharbandora, and Ponda. This includes key locations such as Cuncolim, Velim, Bal-

li, Fatorpa, and Verna Industrial Estate, among others.

As a result, the Seraulim water works in Sanguem has announced that there will be no water supply to the South district on Sunday, and restricted water supply to these parts on Monday. Residents and businesses are advised to make alternate arrangements.

The maintenance work, aimed at improving interstate and intrastate extra-high voltage lines, will focus on the 220 KV and 110 KV EHV substations at Xeldem and Cuncolim.