

FIRE BREAKS OUT AT SONSODDO YET AGAIN

Firemen face tough time in dousing flames; repeated fire incidents raise queries; sabotage not ruled out

Team Herald

MARGAO: Fire broke out at the Sonsoddo dump yard yet again on Thursday, causing widespread panic and anxiety among residents of the locality. However due to the valiant and relentless efforts of the fire-fighters, the flames were finally doused after hours.

According to officials, the fire erupted in garbage dumped outside the shed at around 4.30 am. While the fire was eventually doused, it reignited calls for accountability from both the authorities and residents.

Many citizens, along with a group of councillors, have raised suspicions that the fire was deliberately set by unknown individuals.

Camilo Baretto, a local councillor, expressed his concerns, stating that the recent installation of a shredding machine to process coconut shells and dry waste was already non-functional.

"Repeated fire incidents are a clear result of the municipality's failure to manage the site properly. We must consider the nearby residents and the school in the vicinity, not to mention the high tension electricity wires overhead. Such incidents can lead to catastrophic consequences," Baretto warned.



MOHIT KHARANGATE

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— Savio Coutinho, Former Margao Chairperson

ity wires overhead. Such incidents can lead to catastrophic consequences," Baretto warned.

Barretto also emphasized that the Margao Municipal Council (MMC) must take responsibility and ensure such fires do not happen again. He voiced suspi-

cions that the fire was intentional, pointing to the increasing number of similar incidents.

Former Chairperson Savio Coutinho weighed in on the matter, noting that the fire services had established a permanent station at Sonsoddo due to the fre-

quent fire outbreaks.

However, he accused the local council of allowing the fires to occur as a method of reducing waste accumulation. "In the past, fires were blamed on methane gas from mixed waste, but now the waste at Sonsoddo consists mainly of dry and

garden waste. It's foolish to attribute the fires to heat alone, especially when they occur in the early hours of the morning," Coutinho remarked.

He also expressed frustration with the newly installed fire hydrants, which he claimed failed to stop the fire in its initial stages, suggesting that the fire was allowed to spread for undisclosed reasons. "What was the security doing during the night shift at Sonsoddo?" he questioned.

Coutinho did not spare Margao MLA Digambar Kamat, accusing him of merely inaugurating machinery, such as the shredding machines for garden waste and coconut husks, without ensuring their proper functioning.

"The coconut husk shredding machine stopped working immediately after it was commissioned," Coutinho revealed, adding that this was an example of the council mismanaging taxpayer money.

Despite door-to-door collection, garbage piles up in Aquem

Improper waste disposal haunts locals; urge authorities to address issue

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a surprising turn of events, garbage has been found dumped in open areas within the residential locality of Aquem, despite the Margao Municipal Council (MMC) conducting door-to-door garbage collection.

This has led to growing frustration among locals, who are now demanding stricter monitoring and better enforcement of the garbage collection system.

Residents have reported that, in recent days, a significant amount of waste has been left on the roadside near Royal Hospital in Aquem-Margao. This area, which has been a part of the municipality's regular door-to-door collection schedule for several years, is now seeing the emergence of garbage "black spots"—areas where waste accumulates despite the council's efforts.

This ongoing issue has created additional challenges for the MMC, which now has to work harder to clear the illegally dumped garbage from the roadsides.

Pratima Naik, a concerned local resident, spoke to reporters about the situation. "These garbage black spots not only pose serious



health hazards but also create a nuisance for the community," she said.

She expressed doubt about the effectiveness of the door-to-door garbage collection in the area, suggesting that improper collection practices might be driving people to dispose of waste on the roadsides.

"The recent pile-up of garbage in the residential area raises serious concerns," Naik added.

In response to the concerns, an official from the MMC stated that their contractor regularly collects garbage from households in the area, insisting that the door-to-door collection system is functioning as intended.

However, the presence of

these black spots suggests that either the system is not being fully enforced or some residents are bypassing the collection services.

The MMC has acknowledged the existence of nearly 50 black spots within its jurisdiction, with many located on the outskirts of Margao. The local authorities have been struggling for years to manage and reduce these waste hot spots, which continue to plague the municipality.

The growing frustration of residents like Naik underscores the need for more efficient monitoring and stricter enforcement of waste collection practices to address the persistent problem of illegal garbage dumping.

Pomp, religious fervour mark St Joseph Vaz feast at Sancoale



Archbishop Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrão presides over Eucharistic celebration in the presence of Auxiliary Bishop Rev Fr Simião Purificação Fernandes and other priests on the occasion of the feast of St Joseph Vaz, patron saint of Goa, at Sancoale, on Thursday

Team Herald

VASCO: The feast of St Joseph Vaz, the patron of the Archdiocese of Goa and Daman, was celebrated with traditional pomp and religious fervour at Sancoale on Thursday.

The solemn feast of St Joseph Vaz, a luminous son of Goa and Apostle of Sri Lanka, who was canonised by Pope Francis on January 14, 2015, was celebrated in the premises of old Sancoale Church in the presence of Goa and Daman Archbishop Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrao.

Cardinal Ferrao said that though the feast of St Joseph Vas is celebrated every year, it is more significant because this year marks 10 years of canonisation of Fr Joseph Vaz as first Saint in Sri Lanka. This year is also important as the Church is celebrating the Jubilee Year 2025 at the Diocesan and Parish levels, he said.

The masses were held at 5 am, 6.15 am, 7.30 am and 8.45 am, while the solemn high mass was celebrated at 10 am.

Sancoale parish priest Fr Kenneth Telles informed that more than 1.40 lakh devotees attended the novenas and the feast mass.

He said that this year the feast was celebrated on a grand scale and a large number of devotees attended it. The preparations during the novenas and feast day were also good.



PICS: SAGUN GAWADE

The congregation of the faithful at the feast mass



A devotee kneels during the Eucharistic celebration



The members of the choir sing in glory of God during the feast mass



Stalls selling Goa's favourite chourico pão, grams and sweet meats at the feast fair



South Goa Police register 35 kidnapping cases in 2024, solve 29

Team Herald

MARGAO: In 2024, police stations in South Goa registered 35 cases of kidnapping, including those involving minor children, and successfully detected 29 of these cases. In most of the cases, the alleged perpetrators were arrested, and chargesheets have been submitted to the courts. According to the police, most of the victims were migrants or labourers.

By comparison, until 18

December 2023, South Goa police stations had registered 31 kidnapping cases, all of which were solved.

As per available information, of the 31 cases, six kidnappings were reported in Ponda, five in Vasco, and three each in Quepem, Curchorem, and Colva. The police stations in Canacona, Maina-Curtorim, and Fatorda each registered two kidnapping cases,

while one case was reported in Margao, Cuncolim, Sanguem, and Verna.

All of these kidnapping cases were registered under the relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code, alongside other pertinent sections, and under the Goa Children's Act when the victim was a minor.

Notably, in 2022, 30 cases of kidnapping minors were registered, of which 27 were detected. Seven of

One of the most concerning threats to children today is the growing prevalence of online predators. These criminals use social media, chat rooms, and gaming platforms to groom and manipulate children, leading them to dangerous situations. Vulnerable children, often unaware of the risks they face online, are particularly at risk.

— Adv Prasad Naik, South Goa Advocates Association President

these cases were reported by Verna and Vasco police stations, while five were registered by Maina-Curtorim and three by Colva

police stations. Fatorda, Quepem, and Ponda police stations each recorded two cases, with Cuncolim and Vasco Railway police

stations each registering one case. In most of these resolved cases, the minors were safely handed back to their parents.

While the accused were arrested in most cases and chargesheets have been filed in some instances, it is worth noting that some of the kidnapped minors were sexually abused.

Advocate Prasad Naik, president of the South Goa Advocate Association, stated that in the digital age, technology has brought

both advancements and dangers. "One of the most concerning threats to children today is the growing prevalence of online predators. These criminals use social media, chat rooms, and gaming platforms to groom and manipulate children, leading them into dangerous situations. Vulnerable children, often unaware of the risks they face online, are particularly at risk. Online predators can easily pose as friendly figures—fellow gamers, peers,

or even trusted adults—creating a false sense of security before attempting to abduct the child in real life."

Naik further explained that the digital world, while offering opportunities for education, entertainment, and social connection, has unfortunately become a hunting ground for those seeking to exploit the innocent. Children, particularly those who are isolated or emotionally vulnerable, are prime targets for online predators.