

Broken ACs, power cuts, no cleaners: Canacona's Ravindra Bhavan in disarray

Hardly six months after the cultural centre was inaugurated, host of maintenance issues crop up; citizens demand urgent repairs

Team Herald

MARGAO: A group of concerned citizens, under the banner of 'Canconkars For a Better Tomorrow,' has raised serious concerns about the operational issues at the newly inaugurated Ravindra Bhavan in Canacona. The group has called for the immediate restoration of essential facilities at the venue to ensure it operates to its full potential.

A delegation led by Janardhan Bhandari, along with local leaders and residents such as Vikas Bhagat and Gaspar Coutinho, met with Madhu Narvekar, Member Secretary of Ravindra Bhavan, on Thursday. During the meeting, they submitted a memorandum detailing the operational shortcomings at the venue.

Bhandari outlined several issues, including the inadequate air-conditioning system, frequent



audio malfunctions, and regular power cuts during events. He also pointed out the lack of cleaning

staff, especially for urgent tasks like maintaining toilets. "The generators are in poor

condition, the canteen remains non-functional, and an electric transformer is inconven-

iently placed in front of the building," he said. Additionally, there were complaints regarding the curtains, with some noting that staging events at the venue had become financially unfeasible due to these ongoing issues.

POOR UPKEEP?

- Generators malfunctioning
- Audio disruptions, power cuts common during events
- Canteen is non-functional
- Lack of sanitation staff
- Toilets are filthy, often unusable

Bhandari emphasized that the formation of a committee for the Canacona Ravindra Bhavan has yet to take place. "We urge the government of Goa to ensure immediate and full restoration of all the facilities at this important venue," he added.

Tensions flare in Velsao as P'yat orders Railways to stop work



Team Herald

MARGAO: The Railway contractors tried to resume work on disputed land at Velsao on Thursday, prompting the local panchayat to issue a stop work order to Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL). Residents took to the streets to block the dumping of construction material for the controversial double-tracking project.

The situation took a dramatic turn when police had to intervene to maintain law and order, with one of their vehicles getting stuck after RVNL had dumped mud on either

Residents block machinery; police intervene to prevent violence; P'yat gives railway contractors four days to submit relevant permissions and approvals for the construction at Primeirovaddo

side. "Will they provide us helicopters to get in and out of our houses?" questioned frustrated locals who have been effectively landlocked by the construction activity.

In response to the escalating situation, the Velsao Sarpanch Maria Diana Gouveia, recently issued a formal stop work order to the contractors. The order referenced a complaint from several residents including Sandra Rodrigues, Max Rodrigues, and others, who alleged that Surya Constructions Pvt. Ltd., engaged by RVNL and South Western Railway (SWR), had blocked private property, public roads, and ancient waterways by illegal-

ly dumping soil.

"The way we are treating Goa, very soon the locals of the land will also want to run away," said former Environment Minister Alina Saldanha, highlighting the growing frustration among residents. Beyond access issues, serious concerns have been raised about the condition of heritage homes near the tracks, with residents reporting dangerous vibrations, wall cracks, and persistent sound and air pollution even through the nights.

The panchayat's stop work order emphasized that neither RVNL nor its contractors

had sought formal permission from the village panchayat for construction works at Primeirovaddo, Velsao. It also noted that residents have submitted their property title documents to the Court of the Inspector of Survey and Land Records (ISLR), Margao, making the matter sub-judice.

The panchayat has directed immediate cessation of all "illegal activities" and demanded restoration of the affected land to its original condition. The authorities have given the contractors four days to produce documents substantiating their case, failing which further legal action will be initiated.

GFP slams Goa govt over April school start, calls for consultation

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Goa Forward Party (GFP) has sharply criticised the State Education Department's decision to shift the academic year's start to April instead of the traditional June opening, calling it an unplanned move made without consulting key stakeholders.

Addressing the media on Thursday, GFP General Secretary Prashant Naik accused the State government of keeping even private schools in the dark about the abrupt change. He urged the Chief Minister, who also holds the education portfolio, to put the decision on hold until consultations are held and the preparedness of Goa's educational infrastructure is assessed.

Naik raised concerns about whether the new syllabuses align with the New Education Policy (NEP) and whether the State government has taken a clear stand on scrapping the no-detention policy, which the Centre has already abolished. He painted a scenario where a Class 9 student is promoted in March but later forced

“The Chief Minister had stated last year that April and May were too hot for conducting classes - why has he now reversed his stance? The government had ample time for consultations, as it had hinted at this change back in June last year, but is only announcing it now when the academic year is nearing its end

— Prashant Naik, General Secretary, Goa Forward Party

to repeat the year due to a policy reversal, adding that it would be a huge psychological setback.

While GFP is not opposed to increasing the number of academic days, Naik stressed that Goa's traditional two-month break in April and May benefits both students and teachers, who use the time for administrative work. He also pointed out the contradiction in the Chief Minister's stance, recalling that he had previously deemed April and May too hot for conducting classes.

LAID BARE



The construction of a gutter and road underway near the National Theatre in Panjim has left the area unrecognisable. Panjim locals decry the haphazard and unplanned nature of the Smart City work, alleging that workers move on to a new stretch, without fully restoring the previous stretch

Shack owners demand crackdown on subletting, blame 'outsiders' for crime

Team Herald

MARGAO: Shack owners have urged the government to take strict action against subletting the beach huts, holding this practice responsible for the rising crime on Goa's beaches.

Cruz Cardozo, president of the Shack Owners Welfare Society (SOWS), stated that at least 35% of the 361 licensed beach shacks in Goa have been sublet to operators from outside the State. He claimed that these non-Goan operators are linked to violent incidents, including recent murders, petty crimes, and other unlawful activities that have tarnished the State's tourism image.

Cardozo warned that if such activities continue, Goa's tourism sector—particularly the shack business—will suffer severe consequences. "We have informed Tourism Minister Rohan Khaunte that we are willing to provide details of all sublet shacks. There are around 30-35% of such cases, and many of them are involved in illegal activities. This must stop immediately," Cardozo told reporters after a meeting with Khaunte.

He emphasised that crime along the coastline was almost unheard of when Goans exclusively ran shacks, adding that those involved in subletting should be investigated and held accountable. Cardozo argued that shack allottees who sublet their businesses are ultimately responsible for the surge in illegal activities. He pointed out that the recent assaults and murders were committed

SHACKS TO CLOSE BY 11 PM, NO LOUD MUSIC AFTER 10 PM



The Tourism Department has issued a circular directing shacks to comply with the Noise Pollution Rules issued by the Central Pollution Control Board - which prohibits playing loud music between 10 pm and 6 am. Pulling up shack operators for playing loud music, creating a disturbance to neighbours and not adhering to timings, the circular stressed that any music played in a shack should only be audible within the shack, and that shacks can only operate from 7 am to 11 pm. The missive warned that shack allottees who violate these rules shall be penalised as per the Goa State Shack Policy 2023-26.

Following two recent murders involving shack employees, the State government has decided to introduce stricter regulations, including mandatory police verification for all shack and adventure sports workers. It also plans to issue ID cards with QR codes to staff for better identification of the workforce. Additionally, authorities are exploring the possibility of limiting the total number of beach beds to 150-200 across North and South Goa while implementing uniform pricing for water sports activities.

ted by employees of sublet shacks, dealing a severe blow to Goa's tourism industry.

The delegation of shack operators assured the Minister of their full cooperation in any enforcement measures. "We don't want shacks to be sublet. That is why we have urged the minister to act against all violators without delay," he said.

SOWS secretary John Lobo provided specific figures, stating that nine shacks at Arambol beach, ten at Can-

dolim, and one at Tivai Vaddo, Calangute, have been sublet. He reaffirmed that the association fully supports the government's efforts to crack down on illegal shack operations.

The shack owners' appeal comes in the wake of growing concerns over safety and lawlessness on Goa's beaches following the recent murder of a local resident at Arambol after a scuffle with staff of a shack that was illegally sublet.

Goa govt's Devanagari-only policy has failed, Konkani in decline: Activists

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Global Romi Lipi Abhiyan (GRLA) has firmly stated that the 'One Language, One Script' policy of the Sahitya Akademi and the Goa Government, which has chosen Devanagari as the sole official script for Konkani, has been a complete failure.

This policy has contributed to the downfall of the Konkani language and its diverse scripts, they opine. Despite being taught in schools for the past 38

years and the government spending crores of rupees to promote Devanagari, it has failed to gain acceptance among Konkani-speaking people, said Kennedy Afonso, President GRLA.

He further said that on the other hand, the Roman script, which is not being taught in schools, continues to thrive across all communities, especially among the youth.

Afonso said, recently, Datta Naik, an eminent businessman and former

“By prioritising one script over others, the policy has led to inequality. Writers and creators of literature in other scripts, particularly Roman Konkani, feel marginalised and excluded. This has resulted in a disproportionate focus on Devanagari literature, leaving Roman Konkani literature underrepresented, even in the realm of literary awards

— Kennedy Afonso, President, Global Romi Lipi Abhiyan

president of the All India Konkani Parishad, publicly declared that the "One Script" policy has been a total failure. Recent statistics show that the num-

ber of Konkani-speaking people has dwindled by over 2 lakh since the last census in 2001. The inclusion of Konkani on the UNESCO list of endangered

languages further underscores the negative consequences of the policy.

Studies further highlight the following limitations of this policy. By promoting a single script in schools, the policy has limited the use and development of other scripts, especially the Roman script, which holds cultural significance for the Konkani-speaking community. This has hampered the growth of Konkani in its full diversity.



Public trust in the police force has been eroded over time, with many questioning their fairness in maintaining law and order and investigating cases. The recent transfers of honest police officers have only fueled these concerns. Herald Media asked the people of Goa: 'Have the men and women in the Goa police force become mere political puppets? Here's what they had to say:

HAVE MEN AND WOMEN IN THE GOA POLICE FORCE BECOME POLITICAL PUPPETS?

“I feel the Goa Police are acting under pressure from politicians. They don't make their own decisions. It appears that even police inspectors work under pressure from politicians. Good officers are immediately transferred. They don't have the freedom to handle cases and whichever sensitive cases they handle, they are transferred. Goa's law and order has totally collapsed. Today gang rapes and rapes have increased, molestation of minors has increased, murders and gang fights have increased. It's no doubt the police arrest the accused, but because of the politicians, crimes have increased.

— Xencor Polji, social activist

“The system of controlling crime has totally collapsed. There is no semblance of law and order. Those who are supposed to maintain law and order, the police officers, have been made into puppets. All the police are functioning under the elected representatives. They don't have a free hand. Unfortunately, the corrupt and tainted officers have been given full freedom. Good officers, who do good work have been kept without giving important positions. There is a need to post good officers and reduce the crime rate. Every form of crime is happening in Goa, dacoity, murders, robbery, rape, molestation, drugs, cybercrime, you name it. Our government does not have the will to stop them.

— Mariano Ferrao, social activist

“The way they have transferred South Goa SP Sunita Sawant, it is clear they want the police officer to sit when they say so and stand up when they say so. So, tomorrow if law and order goes out of hand, the government will not take responsibility, and the police will be held responsible. They have made puppets out of the police. Most of the police are involved in bandobast or they have to do the work that politicians tell them to do. Therefore the other police have now to be clever and vigilant. You have to follow the law, you cannot do anything. Today they have kept South Goa SP at Headquarters and replaced her with Tikam Singh. Tomorrow if anything happens, will he not take law into his own hands?

— Tara Kerkar, social activist

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