

Panic at Dabolim as fuel pipeline ruptures during highway digging

Disaster averted as fuel was luckily not being pumped through the pipe when it was damaged; escaping air mistaken to be gas leak; helps workers locate the damaged spot; traffic on airport stretch diverted via Chicalim

Team Herald

VASCO: Panic gripped residents and commuters after a petroleum fuel pipeline connecting Mormugao Port was damaged at Dabolim Junction, allegedly during ongoing road works carried out by a highway contractor.

As a precautionary measure, authorities temporarily closed the national highway to traffic, causing major congestion as vehicles were rerouted. Emergency services were placed on standby to prevent any potential disaster.

A major tragedy was averted as the damaged pipeline, belonging to Zuari Indian Oil Adani Ventures Private Limited (ZIAVPL), formerly known as Zuari Indian Oil Tanking Private Limited, was not in operation at the time of the incident. However, the escape of trapped air from the empty pipeline led to panic, with people in the vicinity mistakenly believing it to be a



Just two days prior, officials from the fuel company had sought police intervention to stop the excavation work near the pipeline while pumping was underway

gas leak.

"The escaping air helped us locate the exact point of damage," said Shriprasad Nayak, terminal manager of Zuari IAV Private Limited. He added that repairs would take three to four days and assured that there was no immediate threat to public safety. Nayak further clarified that the fuel supply would not be affected, as the terminal has enough reserves to last 10 to 15 days.

A ship scheduled to dock at the port with fuel on Saturday will have its offloading deferred until the pipeline is restored.

Expressing frustration over repeated incidents of pipeline damage, Nayak criticized the contractor for negligence. "Had this happened during fuel transfer, it could have led to a catastrophe. That's why we

strictly halt excavation work during pumping operations. Despite multiple warnings to the contractor about the presence of our pipeline, such incidents continue to occur," he lamented.

He further revealed that just two days prior, the company had sought police intervention to stop excavation work near the pipeline while pumping was underway. "Our security personnel were present at the site on Friday and tried to inter-

vene, but the contractor's workers claimed they had instructions to continue excavation. This kind of negligence could have cost lives," Nayak said.

ZIAVPL has marked the pipeline's location with cement poles and pits to avoid



CONGRESS DEMANDS CRIMINAL ACTION AGAINST ROAD CONTRACTOR

PANJIM: The Goa Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) has strongly condemned the negligence and reckless actions of MVR Infra Pvt Ltd, holding the contractor responsible for endangering human lives during excavation works. The party has demanded that MVR Infra be permanently blacklisted from undertaking any further projects in the State. GPCC president Amit Patkar has called for a criminal case to be filed against the contractor and insisted on an independent investigation into repeated violations and negligence.

Challenging Chief Minister Pramod Sawant to act decisively, Patkar said, "This is not just negligence. It is criminal misconduct of the highest order! The Congress party and the people of Goa will not tolerate this mafia-style protection of deadly contractors any longer." He further demanded that the government take immediate legal action, emphasizing that allowing such contractors to continue operating in Goa poses a serious threat to public safety.

such mishaps, Nayak added. Mormugao Mamlatdar Pravinjay Pandit, who rushed to the site, confirmed that precautionary measures had been taken and the immediate threat had been averted.

He stated that traffic was diverted via Chicalim and the Mega Mart road and would resume normal flow once authorities gave

clearance.

Pandit also informed that he had secured a written assurance from ZIAVPL stating that the repair work posed no risk to residents or commuters. He further said that a meeting would be convened with the highway contractor to ensure better coordination and prevent such incidents in the future.

Salcete grievance meet tackles fishers' woes, Raia wetland row

Loutolim ryots complain about deposit demanded for pisciculture in khazans



Team Herald

MARGAO: Various issues concerning villages of Salcete were taken up at a public grievance meeting held at the South Goa Collector's office, which were addressed by Environment Minister Aleixo Sequeira on Friday.

The first was an issue raised by the tenant association of Loutolim, whose members were unhappy with the new sluice gate auction scheme for pisciculture (fish farming). They pointed out that for the first time, they are being asked to pay a 20% deposit, which was not disclosed at the time of the auction. They added that due to this issue, the mamlatdar had not cleared their files and there is no agreement yet, which is causing inconvenience to the small fishermen. While the Minister said he cannot give them an assurance, Sequeira said he would convey their grievances to the Revenue Minister, under whose portfolio such matters are handled.

There was also a discussion between the tenant association leaders and Sequeira about the amount they would be willing to pay. The tenants also said they wanted to pay in installments, as has been the custom over the years, and not in one lump sum as has been demanded. The tenants added that they would submit a memorandum to the Revenue Department on Friday.

The second issue that came up was the demand of the Raia Panchayat, who are against the notification of a lake in the village as a wetland. Given that the panchayat was meeting the

After the public meeting, Environment Minister Aleixo Sequeira directed the police to carry out thorough tenant verification and also to crack down on distribution of drugs in the Nuvem Constituency

Wetland Authority later on Friday, Sequeira urged them to present their case to the Authority, as he felt the order of the Authority would be binding. Sequeira pointed out that the Raia Panchayat was asking for the lake to be declared a heritage site and not a wetland, as this way, the lake would be protected and it would also eliminate the 50-metre-long buffer zone that would come into effect if it was declared as a wetland.

Amongst the other issues taken up were Sequeira's instructions to the police to carry out an extensive and urgent tenant verification in the village and also to launch a drive to eradicate the sale and consumption of banned substances in his constituency. The public grievance meeting at the Collectorate also addressed the issues being faced by the Power Department, who seek to cut roads for laying new lines.

In another matter, the clash between the dates for the ISL game featuring FC Goa and 'We For Fatorda's Carnival programme, both scheduled for March, came up for discussion. The Minister spoke to Fatorda MLA Vijai Sardesai about resolving the issue and added that Sardesai said there would not be a problem for both events to be held in Fatorda on the same day.

No Konkani, no govt jobs: Language groups support govt policy

Team Herald

MARGAO: Konkani Bhasha Mandal and Akhil Bharatiya Konkani Parishad on Friday expressed their support for the Goa government's decision to make written knowledge of the Konkani language compulsory for government jobs.

The recent decision by the Supreme Court, which removed the requirement of proof of residence for government jobs, has now made the knowledge of Konkani language a necessary criterion.

Speaking to reporters in Margao, Ratnamala Divkar, President of Konkani Bhasha Mandal, emphasized that if the government relaxes this requirement for job candidates, it could potentially open government job opportunities to about 100 million people from Maharashtra and

other States.

She added, "If the government changes its policy under pressure from Marathi-speaking supporters, it will impact thousands of unemployed individuals in Goa. Konkani Bhasha Mandal and Akhil Bharatiya Konkani Parishad will strongly oppose such a change."

Chetan Acharya, Executive President of the Konkani Bhasha Mandal and Akhil Bharatiya Konkani Parishad, echoed Divkar's sentiment, indicating that they would not hesitate to organise the people of Goa to resist any such policy shift if necessary.

The joint press conference was held at the Konkani Bhasha Mandal in Margao to show their approval of the government's decision to introduce an examination to assess the candidate's fluency in Konkani.

Public parking lot defaced in Cuncolim, NGO blames civic body

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Green Goa Foundation (GGF) has lodged a formal complaint with the Superintendent of Police, demanding immediate action against those responsible for damaging a public parking area due to the erection of stalls for the annual feast fair. The foundation has also held the Cuncolim Municipal Council accountable for allegedly failing to protect public property.

GGF Chairman Raison Almeida criticized the damage caused by stall owners who dug up sections of the parking and roadside areas, calling it a blatant violation of public property rights. The foundation has insisted that the costs of repairing the damage should be recovered from the Chief Officer of the Cuncolim Municipal Council, accusing the civic body of negligence.

"This parking area was developed using taxpayer money, and yet the authorities have allowed its destruction," Almeida stated.

He further pointed out that despite repeated warnings, the municipal council permitted stall owners

“In the past, we have filed numerous complaints with the authorities regarding the misuse of law and environmental degradation due to corrupt and unlawful practices. The Municipality turned a blind eye to the damage being done to the public property. They allowed the destruction to continue without considering the safety or well-being of the village's development - Raison Almeida, Chairman, GGGF

to continue damaging the area, resulting in broken pavers and a degraded environment.

The GGF has demanded that a criminal case be registered against those responsible and that all repair costs be recovered from both the individuals involved and the municipal officials who failed to intervene.

BUS STOP BLIGHT

SAGUN GAWADE



Tender coconut vendors around Goa Medical College, Bambolim, have started using the newly constructed, unused bus stand as a dumping ground for their garbage and coconut shells, creating an eyesore outside the State's premier public hospital

Nuvm farmers push Sewerage Corp to plug leaks, save fields from contamination

Team Herald

MARGAO: The farmers from the affected areas of Nuvm and Dovandem participated in a crucial meeting with government agencies today, securing a commitment to complete a new sewerage line by March 2025. The resolution offers hope to agricultural communities who have suffered from sewage pollution in Bhogti Tollem for years, preventing them from cultivating Rabi crops during the November-December season.

The Sewerage and Infrastruc-

tural Development Corporation of Goa Limited (SIDGGL) and PWD Div XXI provided firm commitments to address the infrastructure challenges and stop pollution of the fields that grow food grains.

Nuvm Congress leader Everson Vales stated that the farmers also asked the government to provide compensation to those who have incurred losses over the past seven years due to cultivation stoppage.

The joint meeting held on Friday, which included the Salcete Deputy Collector, also noted ongoing work on sewerage connec-

tions in Fatorda.

Local farmers hope the committed timeline will allow them to resume agricultural practices and protect their critical water harvesting systems, which have been non-functional for several years.

The background reveals a longstanding issue affecting farmers in Fatorda and Nuvm. For over five years, the Bhogti Tollem area has suffered from leaking sewerage pipelines contaminating agricultural lands and preventing Rabi crop cultivation during the crucial November-December season. Vales had previously written

to the South Goa Collector on November 8, 2024, detailing sewerage line malfunctions in Dovandem and the slow progress of infrastructure projects. The sewerage line issues have particularly impacted the region's agricultural productivity and water management systems.

Citizens argue that the unresolved sewage management problems reflect systemic flaws in infrastructure planning and

execution, which have had devastating consequences for the environment.

Farmers in distress as sewage pollution paralyzes cultivation in Nuvm

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



WHEN THERE ARE SO MANY PROBLEMS GOA IS FACING, IS A TWO-DAY ASSEMBLY SESSION JUSTIFIED?

“In 'Sarkar Tumchya Dari' there are 200 people, of which 150 are government servants and 50 are government chamchas. However, people don't go there as their work remains unaddressed. Consequently, the responsibility of raising people's issues falls on the Opposition MLAs. But today, Opposition MLAs cannot question the government because they can only raise issues during the Assembly Session, which is short. In the last Assembly Session, the government failed to provide answers to assembly questions. This time, they're unprepared again, so they've limited the session to just two days. One day will be spent on speeches, leaving limited time for questions on the second day. It's clear that the government aims to stifle the voice of the Opposition - Amit Palekar, Convenor, AAP-Goa

Goa is reeling under the onslaught of rapes, murders, assaults and other forms of crimes. The law and order seems to have collapsed completely. Herald TV asked people how the government can justify holding a two-day Assembly session under such circumstances



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“The two-day session could have been extended during the Business Advisory Committee Meeting. However, now that the session duration is set, it cannot be changed. The listed business must be concluded within these two days. The issues plaguing Goa cannot be hidden, and the public's anger and frustration are palpable. People's concerns are not being addressed, and they feel that their issues will not be taken up in the Assembly. Given the widespread discontent, it would have been prudent to increase the session duration. There are numerous pressing issues, including land grabbing, that could have been resolved. Unfortunately, now that the Session is announced, the duration cannot be extended - Victor Gonsalves, Former MLA

“In every Assembly Session, the Opposition has put the government on the back foot. Our three Congress MLAs have proven more than a match for their 33. There are numerous problems plaguing the State. For instance, Bardes taluka went without water for five days. Alarming, a Goan dies every 33 hours. Anyone who dares to fight illegality, as seen in Arambol, faces murder. The influx of migrants has led to a surge in dadagiri, resulting in increased prostitution, rapes, murders, and drug-related issues. The South has witnessed a horrific rape case involving a mentally challenged girl. Our roads and highways are in disrepair. These issues demand attention in the Assembly. Is a two-day session a mere formality? - Amit Patkar, Goa Congress chief