

SCRIPT BARRIER: Romi supporters flay move to make Devanagari mandatory for govt jobs

Warn it would result in an unfair selection process; say minority community will tend to lose

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Global Romi Lipi Abhiyan (GRLA) has strongly opposed the Goa Staff Selection Commission's (GSSC) decision to set Konkani examination papers only in the Devanagari script, warning that it could discriminate against minority communities in government job recruitment.

In a press statement issued on Thursday, GRLA stated that while making Konkani a compulsory for recruitment exams is intended to prioritise Goans in public sector employment, but restricting the language to Devanagari script would place minority applicants, particularly from the Goan Catholic community, at

a disadvantage.

The organisation highlighted that Konkani is a widely spoken language with a rich history, but its development has been hindered by the government's insistence on using only Devanagari script. "The Konkani language must be released from the shackles of a single script and allowed to be used in Roman script to make it more popular in education, government administration, and citizen services," said Kennedy Afonso, president of GRLA.

GRLA linked this issue to a recent Supreme Court judgment delivered on January 29, which ruled that the concept of regional or provincial domicile is alien to Indian law. The court

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— Kennedy Afonso, GRLA president

observed that all Indian citizens share a single national domicile, effectively challenging the Goa government's requirement of a 15-year residence certificate for admission to postgraduate medical courses and government jobs. The organisation stated that this judgment could have far-reaching implications for Goans, particularly students applying for postgraduate seats at Goa Medical College (GMC), as well as those seeking government jobs and state welfare

schemes.

"With the 15-year residence certificate now vulnerable to legal challenges, Konkani language proficiency remains the only safeguard for Goans in job recruitment and higher education," GRLA stated. However, the organization warned that limiting the language to Devanagari script would result in an unfair selection process that favours one community over others.

The group pointed out that Roman script is more widely

used among Goan youth than Devanagari. "Most people stop writing in Devanagari after completing school, whereas Roman script continues to be used daily, particularly in mobile communication and digital platforms. Ignoring this reality could effectively exclude a large section of Goans from fair competition in government jobs," Afonso said.

GRLA further argued that the current system of setting question papers exclusively in Devanagari already places minority applicants at a disadvantage. "If the government truly intends to ensure fair opportunities, it must come up with a solution that protects the interests of all com-

munities instead of enforcing a system that benefits only one," the statement read.

The organisation emphasized that the government must recognize the role of Roman script in Konkani's continued growth and adapt policies accordingly. "The use of Roman script has played a crucial role in keeping Konkani alive in the digital age. The government must acknowledge this contribution instead of limiting the language to a single script," GRLA stated.

The organization urged the Goa government to take immediate action to ensure inclusivity in its policies and prevent discrimination against any community in education, public administration, and citizen services.

Margao kabrastan issue deadlocked

Team Herald

MARGAO: A meeting was held with the aim of finding a solution to the Margao Kabrastan issue that has hit a deadlock.

At the public grievance meeting chaired by Environment Minister Aleixo Sequeira, he called the Margao Municipal Council (MMC) to seek their stance on the matter.

Speaking to media persons after the meeting, Sequeira pointed out that there appears to be a three-way dispute between the Margao Municipal Council, the Church authorities at Borda and the people seeking to construct the Kabrastan.

He added that he had asked Margao Municipal Council to bring some more relevant documents on Monday for another presentation.

LABOUR TASK



SAGUN GAWADE

Labourers place concrete slabs on the jetty at Ribandar, which is being built under the Amrut Mission

Two toddlers drown after falling into Salaulim canal

Boys wandered approximately 50 metres from their rented accommodation, accidentally fell into the water

Team Herald

PANJIM: In a tragic incident on Saturday afternoon, two toddlers drowned in the Salaulim canal near Betmoddi-Bonsai, Curchorem. According to the Curchorem police, the minors, while playing, wandered approximately 50 metres from their rented accommodation and accidentally fell into the canal.

The victims have been identified as 15-month-old Rehan Sadik Shritrey from Karnataka and 18-month-old Wajid Ashpak Hashmi, a native of Uttar Pradesh. After falling into the water, the children were carried away approximately two kilometres from the site of the incident. Fortunately, some locals noticed them and managed to retrieve both children from the water. Their families became aware of their disappearance shortly after they left the area, prompting a frantic search that ultimately led to the discovery of the children in the canal.

Police reported that around 12:30 pm, one body was found, followed by

the second shortly thereafter. Both children were shifted to the Curchorem health centre, where they were sadly declared dead.

The two minors belonged to different families residing in a rented room near Betmoddi-Bonsai, Curchorem. The Curchorem stated that families living in rented accommodation often washed clothes near the canal, and the mothers of both victims were regular visitors to this location.

According to the police, approximately 11 families have been living in the area for several months, with most men employed as labourers in Curchorem. On the day of the incident, the housewives were at home while their husbands were at work.

The fathers of the deceased children were labourers in Verna and returned home upon receiving the news. Earlier that morning, the two minors had been playing with eight other children and wandered 50 metres from their rented room and fell into the canal. The police explained that there is a

wall at the back of the rented accommodation, making it only 30 metres to the canal; however, the children could not climb the wall and chose to approach the canal from the front.

Authorities suspect that the children may have accidentally fallen into the water. A passer-by spotted the children floating in the canal at Betmoddi and alerted local villagers. Medical personnel declared both children dead after their bodies were retrieved and taken to the hospital.

The Curchorem police received a call from an individual named Augustino, informing them of the drowning incident. Upon investigation, police visited the Curchorem Community Health Centre, where the doctor on duty confirmed that both toddlers were brought in deceased. The bodies have been preserved at SGDH Margao for medico-legal formalities. PSI Arun Endro, who is investigating the case, visited the scene and conducted a panchanama and recorded the statements from Rehan's mother and others involved.

Railway contractor encroaching, cutting trees without permission, alleges Issorcim villager

Team Herald

MARGAO: Railway Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL) is facing fresh allegations of illegal tree cutting and encroachment in Issorcim, with the local landowner Luna Pereira, reporting that railway contractors were cutting trees in their family property in the village, close to the tunnel area where double tracking work is underway.

He stated that when he questioned the railway workers about their permissions from the forest department, they had already felled a tree. He added that by the time he returned with his phone to document the activity, the workers had left, raising concerns that more trees in the area could be cut next. Luna attempted to alert the authorities, calling the forest officer, who was occupied with other work, and the Range Forest Officer (RFO), whom he was unable to reach. He then sent photo evidence and other

HERALD PICS



relevant details to the RFO.

It may be recalled that in December, Luna's brother, Bruno Pereira has also accused RVNL of indiscriminately dumping excavated soil into the valley below and encroaching over 100 meters landward into their family property. It was pointed out that there has been no proper demarcation of this area despite repeated demands by the village sarpanch. The Pereira family has refused to accept compensation for their land acquisition, maintaining that without demarcation by the Directorate of Settlement and Land Records

(DSLRL), no work should be allowed to proceed.

Issorcim has been a key site of opposition to railway double-tracking with residents documenting extensive environmental damage. They had then flagged large-scale destruction caused by hill cutting, which buried a freshwater spring, destroyed forest cover, and made agricultural land uncultivable. Villagers also reported that truckloads of excavated soil were dumped into a valley, further damaging the ecosystem.

The issue has also been brought before the Inspector of Survey and Land

Records (ISLR) Court in Margao, where affected villagers, including Bruno Pereira, have formally recorded their objections. The court has held two hearings in January, with a third scheduled for mid-February. Pereira has emphasized that RVNL's activities continue unchecked, with contractors dumping soil on tree canopies in his property without any official property demarcation. Villagers remain resolute in their opposition, asserting that these actions violate both legal requirements and environmental protections.

Unannounced power cut upsets Banalkars

Team Herald

MARGAO: Residents of Ward VIII in Benaulum are up in arms after the Electricity Department conducted an unannounced power shutdown on January 30, catching locals completely off guard. The shutdown was originally scheduled for January 31, according to an official notice distributed through the Panchayat.

The affected areas included localities near Dr Podgo house, Laxmi Temple, and Britto house. Local activist Rudolf Barreto has strongly condemned what he calls "high-handedness" by the Electricity Department.

"The Electricity Department cannot take Benaulum people for granted," said Barreto.

"Many residents were severely inconvenienced by this unannounced shutdown that came a day before the officially notified date," he added.

The incident has sparked demands for accountability, with residents calling on the Sub-Divisional Engineer-I, who issued the original notice, to conduct an inquiry into the matter and provide an explanation to the affected community.

Locals are now seeking assurance that such incidents won't be repeated in the future.

Two-wheeler rider dies after crashing into bus

Team Herald

CALANGUTE: A tragic accident occurred in Calangute on Saturday morn-

ing, resulting in the death of a 25-year-old man named Dhurba Jyoti. He lost control of his motorcycle while riding from the beach side and collided head-on with a local passenger bus at Baga circle around 8:30 am. The bus, driven by Pramod Kandolkar, was entering the main road to head towards the bus-stand at the time of the incident.

Despite being rushed to the Candolim primary

health centre, Dhurba Jyoti succumbed to his severe injuries en route and was declared dead upon arrival. His body has since been



transferred to the morgue at GMC, Bambolim. The police are currently conducting an investigation, including a panchanama of the accident site, to ascertain the details surrounding the incident.

MAX. TEMP 33.7 °C
MIN. TEMP 21.6 °C

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Just to scare burglars – I don't have any dogs!

Team Herald

MARGAO: After being pulled up by the High Court of Bombay at Goa, the Margao Municipal Council (MMC) and the Sewerage and Infrastructural Development Corporation of Goa Limited (SIDCGL), finally submitted detailed affidavits revealing their actions and challenges in addressing sewage discharge into Salpem Lake in Navelim and River Sal as part of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) that the court is presently hearing.

SIDCGL clarified that it cannot undertake new sewer connections to the SGPD retail market complex, citing a February 2024 government circular that transfers this responsibility to the PWD's Sewerage Division which is looking into the mat-

ter. The corporation has also expressed practical difficulties in implementing the proposed Phytoid Bed treatment system along the nullah flowing into the Salpem Lake.

According to SIDCGL's affidavit, they have already installed a KT Weir system for intercepting and diverting water from the nullah to the STP during non-monsoon seasons. However, during monsoons, the system cannot handle the heavy storm water flow as STPs are designed solely for domestic sewerage treatment. The corporation explained that the proposed Phytoid Bed treatment would require a civil tank structure with filtration media and plants, which would block the natural flow of the



nullah, making continuous treatment unfeasible.

Notably, SIDCGL has tendered an unconditional apology to the High Court for the delay in filing their response, explaining that the time was needed to engage legal representation.

Meanwhile, the MMC has re-

operations, MMC's inspection revealed that out of 64 commercial establishments initially flagged, 24 had valid trade licences, 10 were licenced gaddas, and two were sopo payers. While 18 shops were found closed, show cause notices have been issued to nine businesses operating without trade licences.

The council has also convened core committee meetings to address sewage discharge in low-lying areas such as Malbhat and Gandhi Market. A potential solution involving Vacuum Technology for sewerage is under consideration, with PWD engineers conducting surveys in these areas. The system would require approximately 80 to 100 square metres of space for installation,

though detailed reports from PWD are still pending.

In the specific case of the Bondre Chawl area on Navelim Road, officials noted that some units are likely to be demolished due to road widening plans, exempting them from immediate sewerage system considerations.

MMC's Chief Officer, Melvyn Anthony Vaz, confirmed that two review meetings were held - on November 27 and December 27, 2024 - to specifically address the challenges in low-lying areas. The Council has requested a comprehensive report on the potential implementation of Vacuum Technology in Gandhi Market, Malbhat, and Calcondem areas, with space allocation decisions pending MMC approvals.