

Human rights crisis: Majorda still without water, a year on

Residents endure two-three day wait for water supply; PWD claims they do not have the funds to upgrade the outdated pipeline network, ignores orders from Human Rights Commission to restore supply to citizens

Team Herald

MARGAO: Despite stringent directives from the Goa Human Rights Commission (GHRC), and repeated assurances from the government, residents of the Majorda-Utorda-Calata village panchayat continue to grapple with severe water shortage.

The situation has grown dire as families are forced to wait for two to three days for a single drop of piped water, while struggling to find alternative sources in the meantime. The issue has been exacerbated by the lack of funds needed to lay a new pipeline system that could resolve the long-drawn out water crisis. When questioned why they have delayed addressing this issue, the authorities claimed they do not have the financial resources to upgrade the pipes.

It is important to note that residents of Ward 9, which includes Loyola Ward, Francisco Costa Ward-Daktem Bhatt, and Vhodlem Bhatt, have faced this issue for



Villagers of Utorda-Majorda turn to Human Rights Panel over water crisis

I am continuously receiving calls from the residents. I don't understand why the authorities are least bothered about the issue. It's a genuine problem raised by the residents, and there should be no political agenda involved here — Sharlet Fernandes, P'yat member

an extended period, with no regular access to water.

In the past, after relentless efforts to highlight the issue, the residents were compelled to approach the Human Rights Commission for justice and relief.

Speaking to O Herald, Sharlet

political agenda involved here," she remarked. Fernandes also accused the authorities of submitting false affidavits and action reports to the GHRC, downplaying the gravity of the water shortage by claiming it affects only five households, despite the petition being signed by nearly 96 residents.

The petition also highlighted that the villagers have been facing water shortages for several years, and the Public Works Department (PWD) has failed to take meaningful action to resolve the situation. Access to consistent, potable water is a basic necessity, and the villagers are determined to have their grievances addressed.

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Beach-goers aghast as sewage sullies Colva Creek again

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a shocking breach of basic sanitation, sewage was found flowing into Colva creek, raising fresh concerns despite repeated complaints to the authorities.

The contamination has sparked outrage among residents and visitors, who are demanding immediate action.

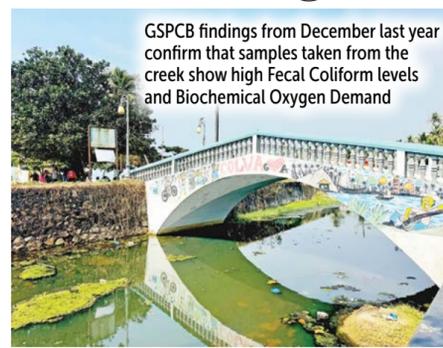
According to local sources, sewage discharge was observed on Wednesday and Thursday, originating from a toilet block at the children's play area.

The issue is not new. The Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) had previously addressed similar incidents, with Member Secretary Shamila Monteiro issuing a notice to the Executive Engineer of the Project Cell at the Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC). The notice required an explanation within seven days on why the operation of the toilet and its faulty STP should not be suspended.

An inspection of Colva creek on December 20, including water sample testing, revealed alarmingly high levels of Fecal Coliform and Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD), confirming sewage contamination.

Local resident Santan Rodrigues criticised the authorities for their lack of urgency.

"Despite repeated incidents, all they do is issue



GSPCB findings from December last year confirm that samples taken from the creek show high Fecal Coliform levels and Biochemical Oxygen Demand

GSPCB INSPECTS CREEK, TWO DAYS LATER

MARGAO: The Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) conducted an inspection of the blackened beach and creek on Friday.

On Wednesday, MLA Venzy Viegas had visited the beach and called for action on the stinking black water channel.

Environment Minister Aleixo Sequeira also responded to the issue, stating that the concerned MLA should have lodged a formal complaint with the GSPCB, 'instead of making

noise at the site.'

"I immediately directed the relevant authorities to carry out an inspection. However, I disagree with the allegation that hotels are releasing wastewater into the creek, as they have already been connected to the sewage system," said Sequeira. Sequeira added that he could not comment on the claim that sewage from the toilet block was being discharged into the creek, until the inspection report is out.

notices—no real action is taken. Notices alone won't solve the problem," he said.

Vinod Rathod, a tourist, voiced concerns over the impact on Colva beach.

"We've been coming

here for years, but this issue never seems to be resolved. The contamination poses serious health risks, especially with sewage water flowing into the sea," he said.

NEGLECTED PARADISE



While the Children's Park in Campal may be the green lung of a city undergoing rapid concretisation, the maintenance of this park remains woefully inadequate. The trees and plants are well taken care of, but the manmade 'attractions' are either crumbling or suffer from neglect - like the water features. The central pond is perpetually scummy, with green, stagnant water which could be a breeding ground for germs. The fountain is dry and shabby, while the play equipment is all rundown and damaged. Boating activities, which were previously operational under the Goa Forest Corporation, have been discontinued. The scenic park, which overlooks the River Mandovi, has the potential to be a tourist attraction and a community hub, but awaits urgent attention



PICS: ATISH NAIK



Police file 164-page chargesheet against Vast

MARGAO: The Curchorem police have filed a 164-page charge sheet against Tanvi Vast of Curchorem and Anand Jadhav, Branch Manager of Central Bank of India's Cacora branch, in connection with a Rs 1.5 crore bank fraud case. The charge sheet was submitted before the Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC), Quepem. Vast remains in police custody on remand in a second case.

According to the charge sheet, Vast dishonestly transferred funds from customers' accounts to her own without their consent, often targeting elderly victims. Police claim she worked in coordination with Jadhav, exploiting the trust of account holders to access their savings.

Illegal construction hearing halted as file goes 'missing' from PMC

Team Herald

PONDA: Confusion and controversy erupted at the Ponda Municipal Council (PMC) after a file related to an illegal construction complaint was reported missing on the day of its scheduled hearing.

Complainant Sudesh Ganpat Naik alleged that his file disappeared on February 13, preventing the hearing from taking place. He claimed that he had lodged a complaint against an illegal construction in 2020, but despite multiple hearings over the past five years, there had been no progress—only repeated dates.

Naik stated that when he arrived for the hearing at the Chief Officer's office, Chief

Officer Yogiraj Gosavi informed him that the file was missing, and the hearing could not proceed. A new date was fixed for February 27. Naik expressed shock over the missing file, fearing that important documents might be lost. He added that another file related to a PMC toilet was missing and demanded that the CO file a police complaint.

CO Gosavi said the file had been sent to Municipal Engineer (ME) Vishant Naik for his notations, but as he was on leave on February 13, a misunderstanding arose regarding its whereabouts.

ME Vishant Naik later clarified that the file had never gone missing—it was on his desk for official remarks.

Bethora locals thwart filling of nullah for building construction

They fear blocking or changing the nullah's flow would worsen flooding in the locality during the monsoon



SANTOSH NAIK

Team Herald

PONDA: Residents of Bondbaag, Bethora, have raised strong objections to an alleged attempt to construct a building by land-filling a nullah and diverting its natural flow. They fear that this could lead to flooding in their residential area during the monsoon.

According to locals, a builder has begun laying the foundation for a construction project by encroaching upon the nullah. When questioned, they were informed that the nullah's flow would be diverted in another direction. However, residents argue that such interference with the natural drainage system could result in serious flooding,

especially since their area already experienced water-logging last year.

Concerned about the potential consequences, locals have urged the Panchayat and Water Resources Department (WRD) to intervene immediately. They have demanded that the nullah's original course be maintained and that any encroachments related to the construction be removed before the situation worsens.

Residents have also questioned whether such a diversion of a natural water channel is legally permissible and have called on the authorities to take strict action to prevent unregulated construction in ecologically sensitive areas.

Locals puzzled as tree branch bursts into flames in Kavlem

Team Herald

PONDA: A sense of mystery prevailed in Paunwada, Kavlem, after a tree branch at a height of 15 metres suddenly caught fire around 5.30 PM on Thursday.

Upon receiving the alert, a team from the Ponda Fire Station, along with a fire brigade vehicle, rushed to the site and took 20 minutes to douse the flames. The unusual sight of a burning tree branch by the roadside drew curious onlookers, with several vehicles stopping at the spot.

Even the fire personnel were

baffled by the incident. When asked about the possible cause, fire officer Santosh Gaonkar said they were unsure how the fire started.

Meanwhile, resident Premanand Naik suggested that the fire may have been caused by a firecracker he had lit on the ground to celebrate the birth of his grandson. It is suspected that either a spark from the firecracker traveled up the tree or a bird carried a burning remnant to the branch, leading to the fire.

Authorities have urged residents to remain cautious and report any similar incidents immediately.

Radiation scare after Ponda cops unearth welding machine

Team Herald

PONDA: A high intensity welding machine, reportedly emitting hazardous radiation, was found during a police raid at a house in Pansule, Dharbandora. According to locals, a tenant had stored the machine inside his rented room by creating a concealed hole.

Authorities confirmed that such welding machines are not permitted in residential areas due to their powerful radiation, which can penetrate iron and pose severe health risks if it comes into contact with the human body. The incident came to light when



SANTOSH NAIK

a local resident noticed the machine hidden in a one-metre-deep concrete pit inside the tenanted room.

Dharbandora Sarpanch Balaji Gawas stated that residents were alarmed by the discovery and urged the police to probe it. Sources indicate that the machine is typically used in shipyards or bridge construction sites and is not meant to be stored in residential houses.

INS Tushil returns home to Karwar after 12,500-mile passage from Russia

Team Herald

PANJIM: INS Tushil, the first of the two Additional P1135.6 follow-on ships, sailed into her home port, Karwar, on Friday, completing a historic journey that spanned over 12,500 nautical miles.

The stealth-guided missile frigate, sailed from Kaliningrad, Russia, on December 18, 2024, and visited eight countries across three continents. The ship was commissioned by the Indian Navy on December 9, 2024, at Kaliningrad, Russia. Defence Minister Rajnath Sin-



gh, Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi, Chief of the Naval Staff, Indian Navy, and Admiral Aleksandr Alekseyevich Moiseyev, Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Navy, attended the ceremony. Prior to this, the ship's crew underwent rigorous training and familiarisation

with the ship's systems, followed by various trials and weapon firings. As a part of her maiden voyage the INS Tushil, which translates to 'protector shield', furthered international cooperation by visiting ports of London (United Kingdom), Casablanca (Morocco), Da-

The stealth-guided missile frigate was commissioned by the Indian Navy in Russia; started her maiden journey in December, docking at various ports across Europe and Africa

and South Africa, demonstrating the Indian Navy's commitment to maritime cooperation and interoperability. Besides this, the ship also undertook patrolling off the Gulf of Guinea.

The ship was accorded a ceremonial welcome on arrival in Karwar. The crew met with their families after over seven months, and the warmth was felt all around with loud cheers from the families, the war cry of the ship - "Nirbhay, abhedya aur balsheel" (Fearless, Indomitable and Resolute) and the Tushil song reverberating in the air.

Children's Lit Fest from Feb 27 in Margao

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Children's Literature Festival will take centre stage at Ravindra Bhavan, Margao, as part of the 3rd edition of the Goa Book Fair, scheduled from February 27 to March 3.

This festival is dedicated to fostering a love for literature among young readers. Organised in collaboration with Publishing Next (Margao) and curated by The Dogears Bookshop, the event promises a vibrant celebration of children's books and storytelling.

The festival will bring together a lineup of over 40 authors, storytellers, and workshop facilitators, offering more than 120 engaging sessions over five days. Notable authors in English and Konkani include Anvesha Singhal, Dr Tanvi Kamat Bambohar, Harsha Shetye, Prashanti Talpankar, Ratnamala Divkar, Nandita Da Cunha, Fiona Fernandez, Vinitha, Lavanya Karthik, Neil Flory, Margie Sastry, and Jerry Pinto, among others.

The Goa Book Fair will cater to readers of all ages, with over 40 stalls featuring a diverse collection of books spanning children's literature, fiction, non-fiction, and bestsellers.