

HC: Seal businesses polluting Salpem Lake, River Sal

High Court slams govt inaction, directs authorities to act fast to plug sewage release into water bodies; orders surprise inspections, strict enforcement at SGPDA retail market

Team Herald

MARGAO: The High Court (HC) of Bombay at Goa has directed government authorities to take immediate action against businesses polluting Salpem Lake in Navelim and the River Sal. The court has ordered the Deputy Collector of South Goa and the Salcete Mamladar to enforce the Goa State Pollution Control Board's (GSPCB) directives and seal establishments violating environmental regulations without delay. The Margao Municipal Council (MMC) has also been instructed to implement its closure orders, which had previously been ignored.

The intervention follows a report by Amicus Curiae Neha Shirodkar, appointed in response to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by Navelim resident Professor Antonio Alvares. The report, based on an extensive survey of Margao's water bodies and drainage channels, highlights rampant sewage discharge into stormwater nullahs and watercourses leading to Salpem Lake. Photographic evidence shows many busi-

nesses continue to release waste into public water systems despite prior notices and penalties.

The Amicus Curiae urged the court to direct authorities to conduct surprise inspections to prevent further violations. Additionally, the South Goa Planning and Development Authority (SGPDA) was asked to make immediate temporary arrangements for proper sewage disposal at its retail market. The HC noted that if the SGPDA fails to comply within ten days, operations at the market should be suspended until effective measures are in place.

A visit by the Amicus Curiae and the petitioner earlier this year revealed severe pollution across multiple locations. At Khareband, water channels carried brackish and contaminated water, with multiple pipes from residential and commercial buildings discharging directly into the system. The SGPDA market was identified as another critical hotspot, with waste flowing unchecked into a stormwater drain along the Margao-Fatorda road. Similarly, the Margao Wholesale

DEADLINES

- **SOAKPITS AT SGPDA RETAIL MARKET: 15 DAYS, failing which market operations will be suspended**
- **SIDCGL SEWAGE LINE STATUS REPORT: 4 WEEKS, on the progress of laying a dedicated sewage line connecting the SGPDA fish market to the underground network**
- **SEALING OF VIOLATING ESTABLISHMENTS: IMMEDIATE. The Deputy Collector of South Goa and the Salcete Mamladar have been ordered to act at once**
- **COMPLIANCE: BEFORE NEXT HEARING Authorities, including the MMC and the GSPCB, must submit an action taken report**



was present in nearly every stormwater channel. A culvert near Kudchadkar Hospital was found diverting wastewater in two directions—one leading to the Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) and the other emptying into agricultural fields, raising concerns about farmland contamination.

Inspections revealed that some businesses, despite previous undertakings of no sewage discharge, continued operations without improving waste management systems.

The Amicus Curiae highlighted the need for continuous monitoring and enforcement, urging the MMC and GSPCB to conduct follow-up inspections.

In response to the crisis,

the HC directed the Sewage Infrastructure Development Corporation of Goa Ltd (SIDCGL) to submit a status report within four weeks on the progress of a dedicated sewage line connecting the SGPDA retail fish market to the underground network.

Despite some efforts, significant gaps remain in the waste disposal system at the SGPDA market. While meat stall operators have obtained consent from the GSPCB to continue operations, there is still no infrastructure linking the market to an underground sewage line. As a result, untreated waste continues to flow into stormwater drains, ultimately polluting River Sal.

'Govt not exempt from CRZ laws': Activists want GTDC's Colva beach projects scrapped

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Goa Civic and Consumer Forum (CCCF) has lodged an objection with the Goa Coastal Zone Management Authority (GCZMA) against the Goa Tourism Development Corporation's (GTDC) proposed redevelopment at Colva Beach, arguing that it violates environmental laws and threatens the fragile coastal ecosystem.

CCCF president Judith Almeida filed the complaint, citing discussions from the 427th GCZMA meeting on January 28, 2025. She pointed out that GTDC's Special Purpose Vehicle had sought permission to "reconstruct" shops within CRZ-IA, CRZ-IB, and CRZ-III zones, despite restrictions on construction in these ecologically sensitive areas. Almeida asserted that reconstruction is permissible only if structures predate 1991, a condition the government's plan fails to meet.

The forum also referred to a 2022 GCZMA order directing the demolition of unauthorised structures on survey numbers 37/5, 37/6, 23/7, 23/10, 23/11, and 37/11, stating that these had been rebuilt under the tourism department's watch. Almeida

CCCF's key objections include:

- Any reconstruction must retain original dimensions with proof of pre-1991 existence
- Concrete foundations should not be permitted in CRZ-IA and CRZ-IB zones
- Official mapping of the High Tide Line (HTL) and CRZ zones is necessary before granting permissions
- Unauthorised structures in CRZ-IA and CRZ-IB must be removed, as even temporary constructions are prohibited

contended that the rebuilt structures are stalls rather than shops, contradicting GTDC's claims.

Raising environmental concerns, CCCF pointed to a 2023 parliamentary report, which identified Colva Beach as Goa's most erosion-prone area, losing 22,563.7 square meters of sand. Almeida cited a study presented in Parliament by Union Minister of State for Environment Ashwini Kumar Choubey, which called for stringent shoreline management. She questioned why the tourism department was pursuing projects that could accelerate coastal degradation, given that shifting sand dunes act as a natural buffer against cyclones and disasters.

The forum further highlighted the contradiction between the government's anti-erosion measures at

Colva Beach and its push for redevelopment, arguing that the project serves private interests rather than the public good.

Almeida stressed that government agencies are not exempt from CRZ laws, and construction in no-development zones must prioritize community welfare over private gain.

CCCF also reminded GCZMA that the tourism department had previously withdrawn a similar project, the Tourism Infrastructure Development of Colva Coastal Circuit, following public opposition.

Almeida argued that renaming the project does not exempt it from CRZ restrictions. She also pointed to past environmental violations at GTDC projects in Colva, including a toilet block discharging waste into the creek and sea.

MMC fee hikes 50% to 500%, not 'nominal', alleges Margao Congress

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Margao Congress Block on Thursday strongly criticised the Margao Municipal Council and the town's political leaders for their steep hike in municipal taxes and fees.

At a press briefing, Margao Congress leader Savio Coutinho, alongside Adv. Snehal Onskar, Clifford Dias, Lalan Parsekar, Mathin Karol, Sujata Parsekar, Lincoln Gomes, Damodar Onskar, Robert Vaz, and Anwar Naroo, accused Chairperson Damodar Shirodkar of misleading the public by claiming that the tax hike was only 15 to 20%. According to the Congress leaders, the actual increase is much higher, ranging from 50% to a staggering 500%.

Coutinho and the Margao Congress displayed a banner listing over Rs 1 crore that could be recovered from those who have been accused of cheating the Council. He pointed to specific examples,

They cite the hike in house tax transfer fees from Rs 3,000 to Rs 10,000; 100% increase in the charges for issuing birth and death certificates; trade license fees, which have risen from Rs 1,547 to amounts ranging between Rs 2,500 and Rs 6,000 and charges for signboards that have been raised by 300%

such as the hike in house tax transfer fees from Rs 3,000 to Rs 10,000. "How can this increase be just 20%?" he questioned.

Other hikes cited included: A 100% increase in the charges for issuing birth and death certificates, trade license fees, which have risen from Rs 1,547 to amounts ranging between Rs 2,500 and Rs 6,000, charges for illuminated signboards (3 square metres) now costing Rs 4,500, while unillumi-

nated signboards of the same size will cost Rs 2,250—an increase of over 300%.

Additionally, Coutinho noted that charges for temporary banners and boards used by representatives during festivals were omitted from the published notice.

The Margao Congress also expressed concern for local businesses, which are already suffering due to the rise of online shopping. "Such exorbitant fee hikes will only force shops to shut down or push businesses into the illegal sector," Coutinho added.

The party has demanded the immediate withdrawal of these steep hikes and warned that they will raise awareness among the public about the financial burden they are likely to face. Coutinho urged the public to unite against the hikes, emphasising that the silence of Madgaonkars will ultimately result in an even higher hike in house taxes.

STENCH OF APATHY



Fish crates and thermocol boxes pile up amidst rotting fish guts, waste and garbage at the SGPDA market in Margao, on Thursday. The dump attracts crows, wild birds, rodents (and snakes) and an assortment of other stray animals

Cops foil illegal cockfight after activists complain

Team Herald

PANJIM: An illegal cockfighting event in Bardez was prevented after People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India alerted the North Goa police about the planned event. The tip-off came from a promotional poster, prompting swift police action to halt the event before it could take place.

PETA India Lead Cruelty Response Coordinator Saloni Sakaria praised the North Goa police, es-

pecially Superintendent of Police Akshat Kaushal, for their prompt intervention. "Cockfighting is inherently cruel, and preventing such events reinforces the importance of vigilance in protecting animals," she said.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960 prohibits inciting animals to fight with each other. In a landmark judgment in 2014, the Supreme Court of India ruled in favour of the petitioners, PETA India, and the government advisory body, the Animal

Welfare Board of India, establishing that bullfighting, dogfighting, and any other staged fights between animals, including between humans and other animals, for entertainment, must end.

Birds used in such fights suffer severe injuries, and these events are often linked to gambling, liquor consumption, and public health risks such as bird flu. PETA India urged authorities to take strict action against offenders to deter future violations.

Margao food carts in poor state of cleanliness: FDA

Team Herald

MARGAO: An inspection of fast food carts at Margao's old bus stand by officials from the Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) revealed several carts operating without maintaining proper hygiene standards.

"The gaddas were in a poor state of cleanliness," remarked an FDA officer as the team carried out the inspection. As a result, the owners of these fast food carts have been instructed by the FDA to improve hygiene conditions or face strict action.

FOOD SAFETY

An FDA official stated that the primary focus of the inspection was to assess the cleanliness of the carts. "The situation is far from ideal. We've directed the vendors to take corrective measures and improve their hygiene. They will need to act on our recommendations," the officer said.

This inspection is part of a series of similar checks carried out by the FDA in the past, often in collaboration with consumer rights activists. However, sources suggest that despite these efforts, the FDA has struggled to take decisive action against violators due to political pressure, which has often led to leniency and only warnings being issued.

"This time, we did not impose any fines. However, we will take strict action in the future if the conditions do not improve," warned another FDA official.

Dumpster fire behind Margao municipality rages for 4 hours

Team Herald

MARGAO: A fire broke out at a garbage dump behind the Margao Municipal building, highlighting growing concerns about the city's waste management practices.

The blaze, which began around 8.30 am, continued until 12 pm, yet no one informed the Fire and Emergency Services about the situation.

Local vendors and residents have expressed their frustration, calling for the civic body to take immediate action regarding waste management, particularly with respect to the timely removal of garbage from this site. They said they were shocked that the MMC did not notice, or make efforts to douse a fire in their own backyard.

No vehicles were damaged, though several private cars parked in the area were at risk due to the fire.

This site, which has been earmarked for a proposed multi-level parking project, has



The blaze was reported in the area earmarked for the multi-level parking lot, which has turned into a garbage dump

continued to serve as a waste dumping ground. This is not the first fire incident at the location; a similar fire occurred in the past, yet the civic body continues to dump and segregate waste there.

Krishna Naik, a local vendor, voiced concerns, suggesting that the fire might have been deliberate. "We have repeatedly asked the authorities not to dump waste here. This area is also used for parking, and on the day of the fire, there were many private vehicles parked here. Fortunately, none were

damaged," Naik said. One worker involved in waste segregation revealed that they were unable to contact the relevant authorities or fire services for help.

Rajendra Azgaonkar, a former councillor, called for increased vigilance from the municipal authorities. "We are unsure why garbage continues to accumulate here, despite regular door-to-door waste collection. We urge the Municipality to ensure the site is cleared at least twice a day to prevent such incidents," he said.

STREET VOICES

The Education Department in a circular mandated that all students should wear canvas shoes instead of leather shoes. The reason cited is environmental concerns. Given that government is cutting trees and allowing land conversions without a care, Herald Media asked parents for their opinion on the mandate

DO YOU THINK THE GOVT'S MANDATE FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS TO WEAR CANVAS SHOES AND NOT LEATHER SHOES, IS SENSIBLE?

Every school has its own protocol for the type of shoes to wear; some were wearing leather shoes, and this should continue. Now that the school is about to close, buying new canvas shoes will be a financial burden on parents. In my opinion, the step taken by the government is not proper. Every school has managed its own affairs by telling students what to wear, and that should remain unchanged. A major suspicion arises: has the government made any contract with a canvas shoe company?
— Snehal Onskar, parent

Scan the QR code to watch Street Voices on Herald's YouTube channel

Although my kids attend a private school in Margao, I fail to understand why the government is interfering by dictating what students should do. Does the government have a separate contract for canvas shoes that they intend to distribute to schools? This is absolutely unnecessary. First, the government should acknowledge that canvas shoes are flat shoes, which get stained easily and have minimal durability. Parents prefer leather shoes because they last longer. What the government is trying to do is force students to buy canvas shoes, and if they get damaged, buy new ones. This means that every year, parents will have to purchase two pairs of shoes, which is unaffordable for the common man.
— Lincoln Gomes, parent

Every school, teacher, and student has their own routine of wearing sandals during the rainy season, switching to canvas shoes for PT periods, and wearing leather shoes otherwise, and this has been the tradition. There is no need for government interference. Today, we witness numerous scams. We know many people remain silent. However, I wish to speak out. This is what the government is starting – with shoes, and who knows, they may introduce something new every month. But don't burden the law-abiding citizens. If you want to generate revenue, recover taxes. Don't try to make money by burdening the common man. If you continue this, we'll eventually discover that someone has looted the exchequer
— Damodar Onskar, parent