

At GMC, clean water wasted for months as authorities neglect leak

Gallons of potable water flow unchecked daily, flooding footpaths within the public hospital and pooling outside its gates; repeated complaints from patients and vendors nearby ignored

Team Herald

PANJIM: While large parts of Goa battle severe water shortages, shocking levels of negligence have led to gallons of potable water being wasted daily near Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMC), Bambolim. Despite repeated complaints, authorities have failed to act, leaving frustrated locals questioning the system's accountability.



two water tankers behind the kiosks — intended for storing clean water — have been spewing water relentlessly through an open pipe.

"This happens every evening, starting around 5 pm, and continues throughout the night," said Ravindra Yadav, a hotel employ-

“I do not know where the water is coming from but this situation has been like this for at least four months. We have complained to the authorities but nobody is showing interest in resolving it. We do not know if the pipeline under the earth is broken or water is coming from somewhere else. We face a lot of difficulties as the footpath in front of my shop turns into a river. Customers avoid coming to my shop as they do not want their feet to get wet

—Shopkeeper, Bambolim

"The stagnant water remains here until late at night, and no one wants to walk through it. People avoid coming to my shop because they don't want to get their feet wet," said a vendor, speaking anonymously.

Despite repeated complaints to the Public Works Department (PWD), no action was taken for months.

for their inaction.

"There is an urgent need to pay attention to the problem not only by the Public Works Department (PWD) but also by the Health Department as the place is frequented by thousands of people," Palekar said.

Following mounting pressure, a PWD official claimed the issue had finally been addressed.

"There was a problem with the internal pumping system in the GMC campus," the official said. "The issue has now been attended to, and there should be no further leakage." Whether this 'fix' holds or the water continues to flow remains to be seen.

No 'fix' in sight for perpetually waterlogged subway at Seraulim

Team Herald

MARGAO: The persistent issue of waterlogging at the Seraulim road underpass has once again raised concerns among residents and local representatives, prompting discussions on both short-term fixes and a permanent resolution.

Despite dry weather prevailing across the State, the underpass remains inundated, restricting the movement of vehicles and exposing the poor significant drainage. A joint inspection at the site was held along with the Benaulim MLA Venzy Viegas, Seraulim Sarpanch Seema Shanke, Deputy Sarpanch Leslie Dourado, panchayat members, residents and officials from the PWD Roads Division. Observing the stagnant water, the MLA strongly condemned the underpass as a 'failed project'.

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“The underpass has failed to serve its purpose during the monsoons due to waterlogging. But we now find it waterlogged even during the non-monsoon period. This only goes to show that there was no proper study of the site before constructing the underpass

—Venzy Viegas, Benaulim MLA

of the site before constructing the underpass," Viegas remarked.

temporary drainage measures will be implemented to prevent further accumulation of water and ensure vehicular access during the dry months. The MLA, however, maintained that these are only stopgap measures and emphasized the need for a flyover to resolve the problem permanently.

"The PWD will take up the measures on a war footing to drain out the water from the underpass. Let us wait and see the results of these measures," he stated.

WELCOMING SPRING, GOA STYLE



A float depicting Vasudeva crossing the ocean while holding Lord Krishna as an infant above his head



Dancers draped in traditional Konkan finery perform various folk dances like Talgadi, Hanpet, Lamp Dance and Gopha, to the beats of indigenous percussion instruments like Dhol and Taso

Hike in service fees fair, necessary: MMC Chief

Team Herald

MARGAO: Reacting to recent criticism and protests, the Chairperson of the Margao Municipal Council (MMC) Damodar Shirodkar asserted that the fee hike was required to allow the civic body to sustain its huge financial expenditure.

Shirodkar told reporters on Tuesday that the hike was decided after an in-depth study conducted by the MMC's Chief Officer and accountants, and announced after a 4-hour long council meeting with inputs from councillors. Shirodkar, who took exception to the criticism being directed to the Margao MLA when it was the civic body that took this

decision, questioned the intent of those trying to rake up a controversy.

He also compared the fees for services being provided by other municipalities like Vasco, Mapusa and Corporation of the City of Panaji (CCP) and said MMC was charging far lower fees earlier. He added that except for a few categories, the hikes have been around 15-20% only, which is reasonable, given that MMC had not raised the fees in years.

Shirodkar also referred to the costs incurred in running the civic body such as the Rs 2.54 crore spent on staff salaries every month and the other costs like maintenance, upkeep of the garage, among others. He added that the market inspectors

are already undertaking surveys to identify businesses running without trade licences - and have found that around 40-45% establishments are doing so. Shirodkar added that while they have issued show cause notices, they are also listening to tenants who have grievances with their landlords, which prevented them from completing the formalities.

The Chairperson also said the issue of the MMC staffer who had embezzled 17 lakhs is likely to be resolved in a months' time with the focus trained on recovering those funds. He added that the issue with the previous Sopo collector regarding outstanding dues will also be addressed soon.

Trapped in their homes, Velsao villagers remind govt they were not consulted before rail doubling

Team Herald

MARGAO: In response to former Union Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu's statement that any project should be discussed with local people before its launch, residents of Velsao have supported his view, insisting that the government must seek public consent before acquiring land for development purposes.

One of the affected residents, Sandra Rodrigues, pointed out that the mud filling that has taken place has raised the ground level of their former traditional public access and motorable road so high that it is even above their compound wall. For context, the road was previously at the level of the base of their compound wall.

Rodrigues also pointed out that the area on which mud filling has taken place, parallel to the railway track, was not acquired by the railways.

She lamented that she has not been able to go out for the last many days. She is landlocked, and there is no way for her to move her vehicle out of the compound either.

Other residents have raised grave concerns about the quality of life, given that they are cut off from receiving medical aid, for instance, especially for the elderly. They also face great difficulty in performing simple tasks like



Piles of mud being dumped outside the gates of Velsao residents, raising the level of the road and obstructing their way, rendering them unable to drive their vehicles out of their gates

“As per the law, a public hearing was mandatory, given the huge cost of the project, which is in crores of rupees. The Railways and State government have used selective laws when it suits them, to try and bypass the public hearing. The land was acquired using an old Act, whereby it was taken without consulting the locals or seeking their consent, while compensation was given under another Act.

—Olencio Simoes, Secretary, Goencho Ekvott

getting in or out of their houses, which can pose further physical risks to them.

Olencio Simoes also said that, as per the law, a public hearing was mandatory given the huge cost of the project, which is in crores of rupees.

He added that the Railways and State government have used selective laws when it suits them to try and bypass the public hearing. He said land was acquired using an old Act, whereby it was taken without consulting the locals or seeking their consent, while compensation was given under another Act.

He also lamented that double-tracking is part of one larger Sagarmala national project to facilitate the transport and storage of coal, and Goa is only being used as a means to an end without caring for the people, heritage homes, or the environment.

Human rights watchdog calls for sensitive handling of sex abuse victims

Team Herald

PANJIM: Taking note of the reported misconduct by officials from the Women Police Station towards members of the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), the Goa Human Rights Commission (GHRC) has called for better coordination between the two entities when dealing with victims of sexual abuse. However, the Commission ruled that no human rights violation had occurred in the matter.

The issue arose after the CWC North Goa filed a complaint alleging that officers from the Women Police Station subjected a child victim to repeated psychological tests at the Institute of Psychiatry and Human Behaviour (IPHB), Bambolim, despite clear instructions to the contrary. The complaint also highlighted the police officials' alleged rude behavior towards the CWC chairperson and members.

The CWC had sought an inquiry and disciplinary action against the concerned officers for disrespecting and undermining the authority of the Committee. They also requested guidelines to streamline psychological assessments of POCOS (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) victims, ensuring their rights and well-being are safeguarded.

The CWC was handling a case in which a minor disclosed that she had been sexually abused by her brother, uncle, and boyfriend. Following this revelation, the Committee lodged a complaint with the Women Police Station, which subsequently registered an FIR under relevant sections of the IPC, Goa Children's Act, and the POCOS Act. During a visit by Women Police Station officials to the Committee's office to escort

the victim for her medical check-up, CWC members informed the officers that the child's psychological assessment had already been conducted by Apna Ghar authorities. The police were advised to collect the existing report from the concerned doctor. Despite this, the child was taken for another assessment at IPHB, Bambolim.

The CWC argued that this action disregarded their instructions and subjected the victim to unnecessary

psychological stress, thereby violating her fundamental rights. When the victim was presented before the Committee for an extension of care, she disclosed that she had been taken to IPHB for an additional assessment.

On January 15, 2025, the CWC chairperson telephoned the Police Inspector (PI) of the Women Police Station to inquire about this decision.

The chairperson claimed the officer responded rudely, refused to answer questions, and displayed disrespectful behavior over the phone. The officer allegedly insisted that the re-assessment was carried out under instructions from the President of the Goa Children's Court and asserted that the police would follow their own procedures, independent of the CWC.

In its complaint, the CWC accused the officer of undermining the authority of the Committee and disrespecting its members, who hold the status of Magistrates under the Juvenile Justice Act.

In response, SP (Women Police Station) Ezilda D'Souza defended her staff, stating that the officers were courteous in their interactions with the CWC members and acted in the best interests of the victim. She urged the GHRC to dismiss the complaint filed by the CWC on January 21, 2025.

Addressing a complaint from the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), the Goa Human Rights Commission has directed the police to streamline their coordination with the CWC, after a minor victim was subjected to an unnecessary second psychological evaluation at the Institute of Psychiatry and Human Behaviour (IPHB). The Commission however ruled that no human rights violations had taken place

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At Raia gram sabha, members demand relocation of cell tower

Team Herald

MARGAO: Raia villagers unanimously opposed the proposed location of a mobile tower in a residential area near the school and demanded that it be relocated to a more suitable site.

Local man Joao Paulo Fernandes clarified that the objection was not to the tower itself but to its current site. "The present site is a residential area, and there is a school nearby. This poses a potential risk to the health of the locals," he stated. Fernandes also inquired about the inspection process that led to the identification of the current location for the tower.

In his reply, Sarpanch

Mario D'Souza said, "The panchayat has communicated objections to the relevant authorities and revealed that a petition had already been filed in court regarding the issue," he said.

Other key topics discussed during the gram sabha included road and drainage development, maintenance of the Raia football ground, and proposals for organic waste management, traffic management, and overall infrastructure development.

Social issues were also addressed, including the need for the deployment of police officers and traffic wardens during school hours to ensure safety.

The meeting concluded with the passing of several

resolutions by the panchayat body. These included the installation of traffic signals, CCTV cameras, and speed breakers.

Additionally, compensation was proposed for the family of a local resident who died due to a faulty speed breaker. Other proposals included the construction of a retaining wall near Gaonkar College, cleaning of the Arlem Junction nallahs, and the installation of a lift at the panchayat office to assist elderly citizens. The gram sabha also resolved to install dividers at two critical locations: near Alex Sequeira's house junction and at Raia Junction, to improve road safety and manage traffic more efficiently in the area.