

# MARGAO CIVIC BODY HAS A MOUNTAIN TO CLIMB TO RECOVER RS 36.83 CR ARREARS

**Municipality has no mechanism in place; show-cause notices issued to 141 'illegal' establishments; most feel Rs 1.5 to 2 lakh daily towards recovery of arrears is insufficient to address the revenue gap**

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** The Margao Municipal Council (MMC) is facing a severe financial setback, with the total revenue arrears for the 2023-24 fiscal year soaring to an alarming Rs 36.83 crore.

However, there seems to be no effective recovery mechanism in place to address this issue.

In addition to the mounting arrears, the civic body has uncovered 141 "illegal" establishments operating without a trade licence during the same period. While show-cause notices were issued to them, it remains unclear whether any steps have been taken to bring them under the tax net.

MMC chairperson Damodar Shirodkar said the council collects a meagre Rs 1.5 to 2 lakh daily to-

## UPHILL TASK

- Pending SGPDA garbage fees: Rs 1.12 cr
- MMC's audit report: Rs 20 cr revenue loss
- Units liable for house & sanitation taxes: 5,410
- Of 2,358 businesses, only 1,671 are paying trade taxes

## MISUSE OF PUBLIC MONEY

- Rs 65 lakh from sopo contractors
- Rs 18 lakh allegedly misappropriated by a clerk
- Rs 8 lakh reportedly siphoned off by e-rickshaw providers

wards recovery of arrears. Most believe this amount is insufficient and ineffective in addressing the growing revenue gap.

Equally disconcerting is the failure of the South Goa Planning and Development Authority (SGPDA) to pay garbage fees amounting to Rs 1.12 crore, yet no action has been taken to re-

cover this outstanding sum.

The MMC's audit report reveals a staggering revenue loss of approximately Rs 20 crore, primarily due to the failure to reassess property and business taxes based on the recently conducted GIS survey. The survey identified 5,410 units liable for house and sanitation taxes, but

only 4,441 are currently paying. Similarly, 2,358 businesses were identified, but only 1,671 are paying trade taxes.

Voicing concerns over the lack of accountability, former MMC chairperson Savio Coutinho said that the council survives mainly on the contributions of loyal taxpayers, while failing to take action against the defaulters.

"The council hardly cares about netting in the revenue from defaulters," he said, pointing out instances of corruption in the council. He alleged that public money is being misused which include Rs 65 lakh from sopo contractors, Rs 18 lakh allegedly misappropriated by a clerk and Rs 8 lakh reportedly siphoned off by e-rickshaw providers.

MMC chairperson Damodar

Shirodkar said that the civic body is actively working to recover the pending arrears.

"On a daily basis, the MMC collects Rs 1.5 to 2 lakh towards recovery of arrears, with the overall revenue collection amounting to Rs 6 to 7 lakh per day," he said.

Shirodkar mentioned that special drives were conducted in the past to recover pending arrears and that the civic body is committed to resolving the issue.

He confirmed that a special recovery team has been set up to take up the issues of revenue losses and property assessments.

Citizens and stakeholders await further developments regarding the effective recovery of pending dues and the resolution of the systemic issues that continue to plague the civic body.

# Roll back proposed hike in service fees: Margao councillors

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** After citizens, now a group of councillors from the Fatorda constituency has demanded the immediate rollback of the proposed hike in service fees and have sought action to address the revenue leakages.

They submitted a memorandum to the Chief Officer and Chairperson, expressing their objections to the proposed hike in service fees.

The memorandum highlights the strong opposition from the residents and taxpayers of Fatorda, under the jurisdiction of the Margao Municipal Council (MMC), to the proposed hike in service fees and other municipal charges.

Speaking to mediapersons, Councillor Ravindra Naik said, "This decision places an unjustified and excessive financial burden on law-abiding citizens, which is unacceptable and should be rolled back immediately."

He pointed out that the audit report for the financial year 2023-24 revealed significant revenue leakages and financial lapses in the MMC, including uncollected taxes and fees. These lapses have resulted in arrears amounting to crore of rupees.

Issues such as the neglect of the GIS survey, revenue arrears, illegal businesses, South Goa Planning and Development Authority (SGPDA) garbage fees, and sopo fees were also highlighted in the report.

"The councillors further emphasised that the proposed service fee hikes, which range from 66% to 550%, are unreasonable and would place an undue burden on small businesses, traders, and middle-income families," said Councillor Ghanashyam Shirodkar.

"This move is deemed particularly unfair given the MMC's failure to address the leakages and bring illegal businesses under the tax net. Small

## MMC UNVEILS BUDGET

The Margao municipality has unveiled its budget for the year 2025-26, projecting revenue of Rs 94.49 crore and an expenditure of Rs 99.88 crore, resulting in a financial deficit of Rs 5.39 crore. MMC chairperson Damodar Shirodkar explained that the shortfall would be covered by boosting revenue through increased taxes and income from unlicensed establishments after a recent survey. However, opposition councillors have criticised the budget, arguing that it lacks a realistic approach.

shop owners, homeowners, and street vendors will have to bear the brunt of these hikes, which could lead to an increase in prices for essential goods and services, ultimately affecting the entire community, the councillors said.

They pointed out that the MMC failed to consult the public or properly inform them before proposing the hikes. This lack of transparency raises serious concerns about governance and accountability, the memorandum stated.

The Fatorda councillors alleged that the MMC unfairly burdens those who are already paying taxes while allowing illegal businesses to operate without consequences.

They also called on the MMC to take urgent steps to recover uncollected taxes, bring illegal businesses under the tax net, implement the audit report's recommendations, engage with the public, address inefficiencies, and ensure accountability before imposing any additional financial burdens on citizens. They also urged the completion of the pending GIS survey.

## Man held for wrongfully restraining minor girl

Team Herald

**PANJIM:** The Panjim Police have arrested a person residing at Dona Paula for wrongfully confining and restraining 13-year-old minor girl, touching her inappropriately and uttering sexual coloured remark.

The accused is identified as Hanumant Talwar. Mother of the child has filed a complaint to this effect. An FIR has been registered under various sections of BNS and Section 8 of Goa Children's Act and Section 8 and 12 of POCSO Act.

## Vasco resident booked in property fraud case

Team Herald

**PANJIM:** The Saligao Police have booked Pundalik Verlekar from Vasco for allegedly cheating one Ranjan Ojha from Parra by falsely claiming to be a co-owner of a property in Sangolda. According to

police, the accused allegedly took Rs 4.5 lakh as advance payment for the plot but failed to provide documents or return the money. An FIR has been registered and the case is being investigated by PSI Sarvesh Bhandari of Saligao Police Station.

## RACE AGAINST TIME



With only 6 days left to complete the road infrastructure project, Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Ltd (IPSDL) is racing against time to finish the works on Rua Ismael Gracias Road in Panjim. The big question is: Will the IPSDL meet its deadline of March 31, 2025?

# CM promises full support to TAG for overall development of tiatr

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Chief Minister Pramod Sawant praised the Tiatr Academy of Goa (TAG) for its ongoing efforts to promote tiatr activities and assured full support in taking tiatr to a global level.

He lauded tiatrists for their role in bringing the Konkani language to the international stage through their performances.

The occasion marked a special event organized by TAG to celebrate the birth centenary of legendary tiatrists: Late Minguel Rod, Vincent de Saligao, Kamat de Assolna, Antonio Moraes, and Mussolini Vales de Meneses. The event saw the presence of Dattaram Chimulkar, Vice Chairman of Ravindra Bhavan Sankhali, and other dignitaries.

Addressing the gathering at Ravindra Bhavan, Sankhali, Sawant highlighted the significant contribution of the tiatr fraternity in spreading the Konkani language worldwide.

"Tiatrists have played an essential role in raising awareness about social issues, among other important societal concerns, through their performances," the Chief Minister stated.

He also acknowledged the tiatr fraternity for its appreciation of the government's efforts to promote and preserve tiatr publicly. Sawant encouraged TAG to recommend tiatr artists for various government-awarded honours and expressed his intention to introduce more awards for tiatrists in the near future.

"Women's empowerment has also been visible in the tiatr world, where female artistes have been actively

participating since its inception," he added.

The Chief Minister urged TAG to take the initiative in documenting the history of tiatr, including the contributions of tiatrists in popularising it globally.

Anthony Barbosa, President of TAG, expressed gratitude and requested further support from the Chief Minister in pursuing new initiatives to promote and preserve tiatr, including the proposed Tiatr Bhavan project. Marcos Gonsalves, Vice-President of TAG, proposed the vote of thanks and announced a forthcoming seminar on tiatr research, along with ongoing efforts to document the history of tiatr.

The event concluded with a musical performance featuring some of the most popular songs of late tiatrists presented by TAG.

## Anjuna resident arrested with narcotics worth Rs 8.98 lakh

Team Herald

**PANJIM:** Anti-Narcotics Cell (ANC) of Goa Police have arrested 33-year-old Karan Govekar from Anjuna for allegedly possessing drugs worth Rs 8.98 lakh.

According to police, the alleged accused was arrested after a raid conducted

Vagator. During the operation, officials recovered 37 grams of Cocaine, 37 grams of Methamphetamine, and 15 high-quality Ecstasy tablets.

An FIR has been registered and further investigation is underway, police said.

# Ponda market sees surge in Sunday shoppers as migrant workers drive demand



Team Herald

**PONDA:** Traditionally, Ponda's weekly market days were held on Saturdays and Wednesdays, attracting locals for their routine shopping. However, in recent years, Sundays have emerged as an unofficial third market day, driven by the growing migrant worker population.

With most migrant labourers employed in construction and industrial estates getting their only weekly off on Sundays, they flock to the market to stock

up on essentials for the week. Unlike locals, who continue to shop on the designated market days, migrants primarily rely on Sundays for their shopping and leisure activities.

Recognising the shift in shopping patterns, vendors have adapted by keeping their shops open on Sundays. Many have also started selling fresh agricultural produce (bagayatdar) on this day, catering specifically to the migrant workforce.

Over the past decade, as Ponda's migrant population

has grown due to increased job opportunities, Sunday has naturally evolved into a third market day, bustling with activity and heavy footfall. Vendors now anticipate strong demand on Sundays, making it a crucial business day alongside the traditional market days.

With this shift in shopping trends, Ponda Market continues to adapt to the needs of its changing population, ensuring that both locals and migrants have access to fresh produce and essential goods.

# New sewer line to bring relief to Nuvem farmers after six-year wait

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** After enduring years of sewage contamination in their fields, farmers from Nuvem and Davondem-Fatorda are finally set to get relief, with the Sewerage and Infrastructural Development Corporation of Goa Limited (SIDCGL) and Public Works Department (PWD) Division XXI preparing to commission a new sewer line from Arlem to Fatorda by Tuesday, March 25.

The previous sewer line in the area had been plagued by frequent leaks, leading to wastewater seeping into Boktim tollem in Nuvem and other agricultural zones. This contamination forced many farmers to abandon their fields.

"The leakage issues were a major disruption for us. Sewage would drain into our fields, farmers developed skin

infections and other health problems. We had repeatedly taken up the issues with authorities," said Everson Vales, a Congress leader from Nuvem, who had been advocating for a resolution with the district administration, SIDCGL, PWD, and the Water Resources Department (WRD).

The sewerage department and PWD had initially assured farmers that the new line would be operational by March 2025, following three years of work. However, frustration mounted, with farmers even threatening legal action if the problem remained unresolved.

"This Boktim tollem was vital for our rabi crop and contamination significantly affected our livelihoods. Now, with the new sewer line in place, we hope the leaks will cease, allowing us to utilise the natural water source for farming," said farmer J S Fernandes.

A natural waterway, or nullah, runs from Arlem to Fatorda before connecting to the River Sal in Nuvem. Traditionally, a sluice gate at Nuvem helped divert water to the Boktim tollem, providing a key resource for farmers. However, due to years of pollution, the nullah and tollem had become unusable, depriving the community of their benefits.

## Govt staff on Saturday duty to get comp off

Team Herald

**PANJIM:** Government staff working on Saturday will be now given compensatory off as the North Goa Collector has withdrawn the part of the memorandum which read as "no compensatory off shall be granted to the staff who are attending the offices on Saturday" following recommendations by the Goa Human Rights Commission (GHRC).

In the action taken report submitted to the Commission, the North Goa Collector Dr Sneha Gitte, IAS, has stated that the memorandum dated October 30, 2024 has been withdrawn to the extent that "no compensatory off shall be granted to the staff who are attending the offices on Saturday."

These conditions are that the concerned staff shall mark his/her attendance on the bio-metric machine after every two hours on Saturday, and the Mamlatdar/Joint Mamlatdar concerned shall certify the same.

On February 26, the GHRC had asked the North Goa Collector to withdraw the part of the memorandum that "no compensatory off will be granted to the staff attending the offices on Saturday."

The two-member Commission comprising acting Chairperson Desmond D'Costa and Member Pramod Kamat in their inquiry report had stated that as per Central Civil Service Rules, a government servant other than a Gazetted Officer working on holidays, has to be given compensatory leave in lieu of duty performed on holidays, as a rule, which generally has to be availed of within a month.

The Collector had issued the Memorandum asking the staff working in the offices of the Deputy Collector and Mamlatdar to attend offices on Saturday, for the disposal of Tenancy and Mundkar cases, in a time-bound manner, by assisting the Presiding Officers of Revenue Courts.

## APPOINTMENTS

कृषि एवं किसान कल्याण मंत्रालय (कृषि अनुसंधान एवं शिक्षा विभाग), भारत सरकार An ISO 9001:2015 Certified Institute

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एसा, ओल्ड गोवा ४०३-४०२ (भारत)

Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (Department of Agricultural Research and Education), GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

ICAR-CENTRAL COASTAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Indian Council of Agricultural Research

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**NOTIFICATION FOR RECRUITMENT**

It is proposed to fill up the position of Young Professional-I at ICAR-Central Coastal Research Institute, Ela, Old Goa, under ICAR-NSP (Horticulture) Revolving Fund.

Selection process will be held on 03-04-2025 at 09:00 AM at ICAR-CCARI, Ela, Old Goa. For further details viz. name of the project, number of post, essential, desirable qualifications, age limit, emoluments and other terms and conditions, please visit the website <https://ccari.icar.gov.in/>

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