

Margao locals take to the streets to protest municipality's fee hike

Threaten to observe 'civil disobedience' and stop paying taxes; slam MMC Chairperson for tenure wrought with financial irregularities; Congress, GFP councillors join demonstration

Team Herald

MARGAO: A group of concerned citizens and taxpayers from Margao staged a protest outside the Margao Municipal Council (MMC) building, opposing the proposed hike in taxes and fees.

The protest saw strong participation from Congress functionaries Orville Rodrigues, Rajan Ghate, Moreno Rebello, and Milagris Fernandes, along with Goa Forward Party members Dilip Prabhudesai, Mohandas Loliencar, and Dr. Babita Angre. Several MMC councillors, traders, house and shop owners, and other prominent citizens also joined the demonstration.

Savio Coutinho strongly criticized the BJP-led Municipal Council and Margao MLA Digambar Kamat, accusing them of insensitivity toward already burdened traders and taxpayers.

Taking a jibe at MMC



Chairperson Damodar Shirodkar's claim that the hike was "limited to 20%," Coutinho sarcastically suggested that taxpayers might gift him a calculator if his own wasn't working correctly.

He further questioned the Margao MLA and the Chairperson about the recovery of pending dues, including Rs 18 lakh misappropriated by council staff and over Rs 65 lakh owed by the Sopo contractor. Coutinho also pointed to the non-recovery of taxes, fees, and rent from

mobile tower operators and petrol pumps occupying municipal land. He demanded that the Council first focus on recovering outstanding dues and completing the survey of unassessed properties before imposing any tax hikes.

Goa Forward leader Mohandas Loliencar accused the "triple-engine BJP administration" in Margao of attempting to "squeeze" the people of Margao, Fatorda, and Curtorim. He remarked that MLA Kamat's decision to implement the new rates

“The MMC must first recover pending dues from mobile tower operators and petrol pumps occupying municipal land before burdening the common man with unjustified fee hikes — Savio Coutinho, Former Margao Chairperson

from April 1 was an added burden on citizens.

When questioned about Goa Forward councillors not opposing the resolution for the hike, Loliencar claimed that the Chairperson had misled councillors into believing the increase was only a modest 20%. However, he assured the public that Goa Forward councillors would now firmly oppose the hike.

He also warned the ruling councillors and the MLA that if the hike was not rolled back, the people would express their discontent in the upcoming municipal and assembly elections.

Andrew Pereira criticized Chairperson Damodar Shirodkar's tenure, describing it as marred by financial

irregularities. He cited incidents such as the theft of Rs 50,000, the alleged job scam, and the recent misappropriation of Rs 18 lakh by MMC staff.

Councillors Ravindra Naik and Lyndon Pereira voiced their complete opposition to the steep hike, while Camilo Barretto called it unjustified, warning that it would place a severe financial strain on the common man.

Concluding the protest, Coutinho warned that if the Council proceeded with the tax hike despite public opposition, taxpayers would be compelled to take action. He announced that they would resort to a civil disobedience movement by refusing to pay municipal taxes.

Civic group demands 'white paper' on MMC services, councillor performances

Team Herald

MARGAO: Civic group Madganvcho Awaaz has submitted a memorandum to the Margao Municipal Council (MMC), demanding a roll-back of the steep hikes in municipal taxes and fees, including trade licenses, construction permits, and sanitation charges.

The organization has also called for the release of a White Paper detailing the services provided by the MMC and an appraisal of the performance of both councillors and municipal employees over the past four years.

The memorandum, signed by youth leader Prabhav Naik and addressed to the Chief Officer, refers to an earlier demand

made by Madganvcho Awaaz on March 1, immediately after the MMC announced the tax hikes.

Naik has urged the MMC to issue a White Paper covering various municipal services, including scientific waste management, hygienic public toilets, drinking water kiosks, market maintenance, upkeep of traffic islands and public spaces, action against illegal activities, and an assessment of councillors' and municipal employees' performance.

Criticizing the fee hikes, Naik argued that they disproportionately burden law-abiding citizens while benefiting those engaged in illegal activities, often with MMC's tacit approval. He also cited audit reports

pointing to the council's mismanagement, failure to maintain public spaces, and rampant corruption.

"The Margao Municipal Council has completely failed in its responsibilities, and its inability to maintain public spaces or provide essential services is evident," Naik stated in the memorandum.

He further questioned the justification for the hikes, arguing that if the MMC claims taxes haven't been increased in 15 years, it must first demonstrate what improvements have been made in that time. "We believe the situation has worsened, not improved. MMC should focus on improving service delivery and tackling corruption," Naik asserted.

Shoddy roadwork on Piraraj-Vorcotto stretch puts lives at risk

Team Herald

SANGUEM: The newly constructed road from Piraraj to Vorcotto is nothing but a death trap. What was supposed to be a crucial upgrade has turned into a dusty, dangerous mess, raising serious questions about the quality of work and the accountability of those responsible.

Far from being a properly laid road, it is merely a stretch of mud carelessly covered with loose gravel. There is no tarring, no solid base, just stones scattered over dirt. Every passing vehicle kicks up a thick cloud of dust, reducing visibility and making it hazardous for riders and pedestrians alike.

The situation is even more alarming given that the road features steep slopes and sharp hairpin bends, leading directly to a river. Two-wheeler riders and cyclists are particularly at risk—one skid could send them tumbling down the slope. Locals fear that it's only a matter of time before a serious accident occurs.

Residents are outraged,



The road features steep slopes and sharp hairpin bends, leading directly to a river



The 'road' is merely a stretch of mud carelessly covered with loose gravel - no tarring, just stones scattered over dirt

questioning why the authorities even bothered with the so-called construction if this is the result. The excuse given earlier was that hot-mixing machines couldn't reach the site. But people are now asking: If heavy vehicles carrying gravel could make it there, why couldn't the necessary road-laying

equipment? Local MLA Subhash Phal Desai, who had laid the foundation stone for the road, has now assured that a retaining wall will be built. But residents say this is just another band-aid solution—what they need is a properly tarred, durable road, not yet another patchwork fix.

Law & order review meet held in South Goa

Team Herald

MARGAO: The District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police (SP) of South Goa jointly conducted a high-level meeting to review the law and order situation in the district. The meeting was attended by all Sub-Divisional Magistrates (SDMs) and Sub-Divisional Police Officers (SDPOs) from across South Goa.

Key directives were issued to expedite pending case inquiries and maintain a strict vigil on law and order to ensure public safety. Authorities emphasized the need for proactive policing, timely resolution of cases, and heightened surveillance in sensitive areas to curb crime and maintain peace in the region.

FAITH IN MOTION



Parishioners of St Thomas Church, Aldona, held the Way of the Cross (Khursachi Vatt) across the village, reciting the Rosary, singing hymns, and reflecting on the 14 Stations of the Cross. The procession began with the First Station at the church, continuing through designated spots before circling back to the church premises with a short prayer led by Parish Priest Fr Tomas Lobo

Tiatr a cultural mirror and catalyst for change, says Auxillary Bishop

Team Herald

MAPUSA: Tiatr is not just a source of entertainment but a powerful medium for societal reflection and cultural preservation, said Auxiliary Bishop of Goa and Daman, Most Rev. Dr. Simiao Purificação Fernandes, at an international seminar on tiatr held at St. Xavier College, Mapusa.

The seminar, organized by the Tiatr Academy of Goa (TAG) in collaboration with the college, was inaugurated by the Auxiliary Bishop in the presence of Chief Guest Prof. Kyoko Matsukawa, a researcher from Japan.

In his address, Auxiliary Bishop Dr. Fernandes underscored tiatr's role in shaping values and inspiring introspection. "Tiatr is a thought-provoking art form. It compels audiences to reflect deeply after watching a performance. It also serves as a source of inspiration for life," he said. He further stressed that tiatr acts as a mirror to society, helping individuals reconnect with Goan culture and traditions. Applauding TAG's efforts, he praised the academy's role in keeping the art form alive.

Prof. Kyoko Matsukawa emphasized the importance of tiatr in preserving the Konkani language. "Tiatr, along with Konkani, is a crucial part of Goan iden-



“Tiatr is a thought-provoking art form. It compels audiences to reflect deeply after watching a performance. It also serves as a source of inspiration for life, and acts as a mirror to society, helping individuals reconnect with Goan culture and traditions — Rev. Dr. Simiao Purificação Fernandes, Auxiliary Bishop, Goa and Daman

ty. It is essential that both are protected and nurtured. Tiatrists carry Goan culture across the world, ensuring its global reach," she noted.

During the event, TAG committed to signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with St.

Xavier College to further promote and encourage tiatr. TAG President Anthony Barbosa outlined plans to engage the younger generation in tiatr, while Rev. Fr. Antonio Salema, Administrator of St. Xavier College, addressed the gathering. College Principal Prof. Filipe Rodrigues e Melo welcomed the attendees, and The TAG Vice-President proposed the vote of thanks and also announced TAG's upcoming initiative to launch a research journal on tiatr, a move aimed at documenting and studying the art form in greater depth.

The seminar featured a keynote address by Fausto V. Da Costa, editor of Gulab, who provided insights into the evolution of tiatr.

By the end of the seminar, the message was clear: tiatr remains a vital part of Goan culture, not just as entertainment, but as a force for social awareness, linguistic preservation, and global cultural exchange.

State's first 'Agro Clinic' launched at Sankhali, to provide free training, expert advice to farmers

Team Herald

BICHOLIM: Goa's first Agro Clinic has been set up at Sankhali by local farmer Meenanath Jalmi under a Central government scheme, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant announced on Friday.

"The clinic offers free 45-day training to interested individuals," Sawant said. Agri-Clinics provide expert advice on soil health, cropping practices, animal care, feed management, and market prices. He added that more such clinics will be established across

Agri-Clinics provide advice on soil health, cropping practices, animal care, feed management, and market prices; more are likely to be set up across the State, said CM Pramod Sawant

the State.

Sawant was speaking at the Buyer-Seller Meet 2025, a two-day event organized by the Directorate of Agriculture in association with the Agricultural Technology Management Agency, North, and the Agriculture Office at Ravindra Bhavan, Sankhali.

Highlighting the impact of the Swayampurna Goa initiative, Sawant said it has reduced horticultural imports by 30%. "To further boost organic farming, we will implement an Rs 18 crore project with Union government support," he said.

Encouraging farmers to utilise

barren land, Sawant emphasised the role of innovation and technology in making agriculture more sustainable and profitable.

Speaking on the Automated Agriculture project at Surla, Bicholim, he said the government has invested Rs 4.5 crore under Swayampurna Goa Mission, benefiting 100 farmers in the area.

Mayem MLA Premendra Shet urged farmers to leverage government schemes, noting that three new agriculture boards announced in the state budget aim to make Goa self-sufficient.



DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE GOVT WILL STOP ALL ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTION, AS PER COURT ORDERS?

Almost every Revenue Minister in the State of Goa has pushed for regularization of illegal constructions, whether on Government or Communi dade land. The High Court order to remove all illegal constructions on communi dade land comes as a severe castigation to politicians who support squatters.

“This is debatable in the first place. Authorities may act against some illegal constructions where the people involved are powerless. They will target those who lack money, connections, and influence. However, they will deliberately avoid taking action against powerful individuals. Secondly, they will mostly act against illegalities committed by Goans while turning a blind eye to violations by certain parties, especially those from Delhi with connections to the Centre. If the government claims it is serious about cracking down on illegal structures and construction, it should first come clean about the Bhutani project. To date, despite clear evidence that the project is entirely illegal, no action has been taken against it — Anthony D'Silva, activist

YouTube



Watch Street Voices on Herald Media on YouTube by scanning the QR code

“The government has woken up only after receiving a chabuk from the court. There have been multiple court orders in the past, many of which were blatantly ignored by officials. It is the duty of the government and its officers to obey court rulings. Why does the government exist? To serve the people. Why do we have a High Court? To ensure justice. When someone faces injustice, they turn to the court, hoping for a fair resolution. And it is the court that directs the government to demolish illegal structures — Tanoj Adwalpalkar, social activist

“The Goa Government has decided to introduce The Goa Regularisation of Unauthorised Constructions Act to legalize unauthorized structures up to 1,000 sqm in urban areas and 600 sqm in rural areas. It seems clear that this Act is designed to legitimize illegal constructions. What other motive could there be? The vote bank factor is undeniable—they will not risk losing their core support by demolishing these structures. If they crack down on their own vote bank, they jeopardize their chances of returning to power. In such a scenario, who ends up being targeted? It's not the violators, but rather the opponents, whistleblowers, or anyone who dares to raise this issue. They are the ones who face the heat first — Mariano Ferrao, activist