

# 'System down': On Day 1, technical glitch hits e-stamp initiative

### Citizens queue up for hours and return annoyed, without completing tasks; e-stamping touted as secure, efficient, tamper-proof digital alternative to stamp papers

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** A government initiative to implement e-stamping faced an unexpected setback on its first day at the Margao Sub-Registrar office, as the system reportedly went down, causing significant disruption and delays. The e-stamping system, announced by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, was introduced to streamline stamp duty payments for various legal documents. The initiative aims to replace traditional stamp papers with a secure digital alternative, improving efficiency and reducing the risk of tampering.

However, on its first day of operation, the system encountered technical difficulties, leaving both office staff and the public frustrated. The Chief Minister had stated that e-stamping would be mandatory for all transactions exceeding Rs 9,999 in Goa from April 1 onwards. Non-judicial stamp papers, franking, and stamp duty via challan would no longer be accepted for such amounts. Despite this, several people who arrived to complete their documentation found themselves unable to proceed due to the system failure.

Suraj Vernekar, an officer at the Sub-Registrar office, confirmed that the technical issue was unexpected and that efforts were being made to restore the system. However, the downtime led to a backlog, forcing many applicants to leave without completing their tasks. Applicants expressed disappointment, with some criticising the lack of proper testing before the system's launch. The failure on the very first day raised concerns about the system's readiness and reliability, potentially undermining public trust despite its intended benefits.

**“It was the government’s duty to ensure the system was fully functional before launching it. This has caused unnecessary trouble for the public.”** *Suganda Keni, local*

**“I may have to cancel my flight if the system isn’t restored. I was assured my e-stamping application would be processed today, but I’ve been waiting since morning with no sign of progress.”** *Name withheld, foreign national*

Suganda Keni voiced frustration, saying, “It was the government’s duty to ensure the system was fully functional before launching it. This has caused unnecessary trouble for the public.” A foreign national scheduled to leave Goa the same evening also expressed frustration. “I may have to cancel my flight if the system isn’t restored. I was assured my e-stamping application would be processed today, but I’ve been waiting since morning with no sign of progress,” he said, requesting anonymity.

# Next year’s syllabus for some students, zero teaching for others: Parents question relevance of school in April

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** In a surprising turn of events, students will begin learning the syllabus for the next academic year—set to start on April 7—before the results of their previous class are declared. Many consider this an unusual and impractical approach.

### EXERCISE IN FUTILITY?

■ Students will be started on next year’s syllabus when school reopens on April 7—without knowing if they have passed the grade, as results are expected by April-end  
■ With teachers still busy grading exam papers, Class 12 students, who continue to go to school, are forced to sit idly in class, with no lessons being taught  
■ Parents slam the apparent insensitivity of the State govt; point out that both students and teachers need time off to unwind after the stressful exam period

Further complicating matters, students in several educational institutions continue attending classes after their exams but are reportedly left without actual teaching. Instead, they are simply asked to sit in the classroom, which many see as a waste of time—not only for students but also for working parents juggling tight schedules.

These developments have sparked growing concerns, with parents expressing shock over the apparent lack of consideration for students, teachers, and families, amid the implementation of the new National Education Policy in Goa.

Sources indicate that results for students in grades I to IX are expected to be released by the end of April, as teachers work to complete grading. However, they are simultaneously under pressure to commence the new

academic year on April 7, as per the government’s directive. Balancing both tasks is proving to be a significant challenge for educators.

Speaking to **O Heraldo**, Jacinta Satnimano, a parent from Salcete, voiced her frustration, stating that authorities have overlooked the challenges faced by students, teachers, and parents.

“Students will be confused when they receive re-

sults for the previous class while already learning the next syllabus. This diminishes the value of what they previously studied,” she said. “What’s the point of a child sitting in class only to receive their results at the end of the month? It’s frustrating.”

Neeta Naik, another concerned parent, criticized the new system as an unnecessary source of confusion. “Students, teachers, and parents all need time to refresh. With the constant pressure of studies and tough competition in education, adding more stress will only worsen the situation,” she stated.

Additionally, sources revealed that students who had completed their 11th-grade exams were also required to attend classes without any teaching taking place. “Teachers weren’t even entering the classrooms, so students sat there for hours and left without learning anything,” sources said.

A teacher, who requested anonymity, confirmed the confusion and pressure among faculty members, stating that they are struggling to adjust to the new system and the impending start of the academic year.

# State-wide drive launched to neuter beach stray dogs

### According to shack owners, the South Goa district hospital recorded 840 dog bites in February alone

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** The Coastal Belt Sterilisation Camp 2025 for South Goa was officially launched on Tuesday at the Fisheries Sub Office in Colva. The initiative, running until April 19, is a collaboration between Mission Rabies, Worldwide Veterinary Services (WVS), and the government. At the launch, Benaulim MLA Venzy Viegas spoke at length about how this project can achieve its targets and what more can be done, while also detailing follow-up actions taken in the past to address the stray dog issue.

The drive comes against the backdrop of alarming statistics showing 840 dog bite cases in February alone at South Goa District Hospital, with beaches like Benaulim, Betalbatim, Colva and Cavelossim being priority areas. Mission Rabies teams will conduct awareness sessions about dog behaviour and proper garbage disposal, while pamphlets will be distributed to hotels and hoardings erected along beaches to educate visitors.

Cavelossim Sarpanch Dixon Vaz welcomed the initiative, stating, “The coastal belt has seen a big rise in the number of stray dogs in recent months. We have witnessed an increasing number of dog bite cases along the belt. This camp was long overdue.” He thanked the Animal Husbandry and Tourism Departments for their support, particularly not-

ing problems along the Cavelossim-Mobor beach belt where several attacks on visitors, including foreign tourists, have occurred. The South Goa initiative is part of a larger pan-Goa effort targeting approximately 2,000 stray dogs. In North Goa, the beaches of Candolim, Calangute, Baga, Arambol, Ozran and Vagator will be covered in the sterilization drive, with dogs transported to the WVS Centre in Assagao for procedures before being returned.

# TANGLED HAZARD

JOSEPH FERNANDES



Bunches of internet cables tied to an electricity pole near Vidya Prabodhini High School, Porvorim, pose an obstruction to pedestrians using the footpath

# Industrial estate is making us sick, say Cuncolkars

### Blame high levels of air, water pollution; cite PHC study that diagnosed 28 people with respiratory problems, 11 with asthma, 29 afflicted with skin issues, apart from cases of TB, kidney disease among others

# Health Department directs PHC to probe pollution-linked health issues at Cuncolim

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** In light of mounting health concerns linked to pollution from the Cuncolim Industrial Estate, the Directo-

**ESTATE OF NEGLIGENCE**  
Locals allege pollution from steel manufacturing and fishmeal plants

**WATER QUALITY HIT**  
Alarming levels of Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) and Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD) cause eutrophication (nitrates, phosphorus) cause increase in respiratory

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Residents of Cuncolim are complaining that they are falling sick very often, blaming pollution from the Cuncolim Industrial Estate for the surge in health issues.

residents from Simplear, Kegdicotto, Masconi, Belathemb, Gullecotto, Bhatti, Takaband, and IDC were suffering from various conditions, including cancer, respiratory problems, and kidney disease.

that the increasing health problems are clear evidence of severe pollution.

A health survey conducted by the Primary Health Centre (PHC)-Balli revealed alarming statistics: 28 cases of respiratory problems, 29 individuals with skin allergies, 11 with asthma, and one case of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

In response, locals are demanding urgent action, calling for an immediate investigation into air and water pollution levels in the area. Sanjay Dessai, a Cuncolim resident, emphasised that this issue has been raised for years but remains unresolved. “The number of cases reported at the health centre clearly shows the high level of pollution here,” he said.

Local MLA Yuri Alemao also weighed in, issuing a stern warning to authorities. He cautioned that if promised measures are not implemented promptly, there will be public backlash.

Additionally, cases of chronic kidney disease, sinus issues, tuberculosis, psoriasis, dust allergies, and eye irritation were reported.

Another resident, Alison Noronha, agreed, stating

“We have consistently raised concerns about pollution at the Cuncolim Industrial Estate, which led to this health survey. It is evident that many residents are suffering because of it. They should not have to endure this any longer—pollution must be stopped for good,” Alemao said. He urged the government to fulfill its commitments and ensure timely action to address the crisis.

# Angry Gogol locals clean up drains, leave garbage at residential complex gates to protest illegal dumping

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Residents of Amrutnagar, Gogol, are outraged over the continued dumping of garbage into rainwater drains, causing them serious inconvenience and posing an environmental hazard.



The locals had earlier warned residents of the housing complex that they would return the garbage to their doorstep if they failed to clean it up

Frustrated by inaction, locals took matters into their own hands, collecting the waste from the drains and dumping it in front of the housing society responsible as a form of protest. Earlier in the day, they had warned that if the garbage wasn't removed immediately, they would return it to the premises.

some residents continue to dump waste irresponsibly in open areas, along roadsides, and in drains—a practice the community finds unacceptable.

resident, condemned the act as “shameful,” highlighting its environmental impact. After tracing the source of the waste, he warned that if it wasn't cleared by evening, he would personally ensure it was returned to the build-

ing responsible. “A clean society begins with us,” Buyao stated, urging residents to use the waste collection system properly. He also pointed out that garbage accumulation leads to waterlogging,



as the drain water flows from Sonsoddo, causing recurring issues that require

constant maintenance. Resident Sarvanand Naik called for heavy fines against offenders, arguing that careless dumping undermines the municipality's waste management efforts and continues to trouble the community.

Custodio Fernandes of Borda echoed these concerns, noting that such irresponsible actions often come from so-called educated individuals, particularly those in housing societies. He urged authorities to hold them accountable and issue strict warnings.

Residents are now demanding stricter enforcement of waste disposal rules and greater civic awareness to ensure a cleaner, healthier environment.

**MAX. TEMP 34.2°C**  
**MIN. TEMP 26.5°C**

**STREET VOICES**  
WHERE GOANS ARE HEARD

# WHAT DO THE TAXPAYERS OF MARGAO FEEL ABOUT THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL'S TAX HIKE?



Not an earthquake, we hosted a stand-up comedy show

The recent tax hike by the Margao Municipality has sparked intense debate and protests among locals. With reported tax increases ranging from 66% to a staggering 550%, many are questioning the move, citing lack of improvement in municipal services. Herald Media took to the streets to gauge public opinion on the contentious issue, gathering reactions from Margao residents on the MMC tax hike

**“ Taxes have been increased beyond limit. There should be a slab. They can't raise taxes too much. It is said that they have raised taxes by more than 500 percent. Most shops in the Margao area do not have trade licences and are operating without them. In my own building at Fatorda, people are staying in flats without occupancy certificates. The shops, too, are running without trade licences. Why is the MMC not collecting their taxes? Do common people have to pay taxes while defaulters don't? The MMC should send inspectors to conduct a survey and find out who is paying and who is not. — Franklin D'Costa, tax payer**

**“ We had organized a protest. Now we learn that even in the vicinity of the municipality, only 20% of the people are paying taxes. The simple solution is to first collect the outstanding dues. If the MMC recovers these unpaid taxes for just one year, they will have to lower their taxes. Do this first—then also recover the money that has been siphoned off. If they collect these dues, it will benefit the citizens. Secondly, they haven't fed anything into the NIC system. They have played an April Fool's joke. They were supposed to implement the tax hike from April 1st, but they don't even realize that it's a bank holiday. What kind of management is this? — Lincoln Gomes, tax payer**

**“ We have repeatedly raised our voices against the tax hike process, which is itself illegal. There are errors in the notification. Today, we casually discovered that staff have been instructed to enter individual shop areas into the system. However, they don't even have data on the actual size of taxpayers' shops. They have to refer to house tax files instead. In some cases, three shops have been amalgamated into one, but MMC has no record of this. The tax receipt still reflects only one shop, so how can they accurately calculate the tax? I just can't understand why the Margao MLA is silent on this. The MMC seems determined to create trouble for the people — Savio Coutinho, Shadow Council of Margao**

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