

Heavy rain brings pain, people caught unawares

Incessant downpour wreaks havoc in Sattari, Canacona talukas, falling trees damage houses, electricity poles; crops battered

Team Herald

VALPOI: Heavy rains accompanied by gusty winds which lashed the State yesterday caught people unawares and left a trail of destruction in Sattari and Canacona talukas.

Several trees were uprooted, roads were blocked, and damage was reported to homes and public infrastructure. Sanguem, Pernem and Tiswadi was also affected by the downpour.

In Sattari, the downpour triggered multiple incidents across the taluka, keeping the Valpoi fire services personnel on their toes. Fallen trees on roads and houses were reported from various areas, while areas were left without electricity for the entire day.

Valpoi fire personnel were seen working tirelessly to clear uprooted trees from roads and houses across the taluka. Water-logged roads were reported from multiple villages, compounding the difficulties for residents.

According to fire officials, trees were uprooted and blocked roads at Barazan, Nanus, Mauxi, Velguem, Hathwada, and Velus. In Barazan, a jackfruit tree fell on two parked motorbikes, causing significant damage. Numerous electric poles were brought down as trees came crashing onto them.

Some houses also suffered partial damage when trees collapsed onto rooftops. In another incident, the roof tiles of newly constructed Sulabh toilets at Valpoi were blown off by strong winds.

As authorities work to restore normalcy, residents have been advised to remain cautious, especially in areas where electric poles



Vehicles move through a water-logged road in Valpoi



A farmer inspects his damaged vegetable field at Canacona



A fireman hacks off a fallen tree at Sattari



An uprooted tree landed on the roof of a house in Sattari



A mud house completely damaged at Sanguem



An uprooted tree blocked the main road in Valpoi

and debris still pose risks.

Raghu Karmalkar, 52, from Sanguem had a miraculous escape when his mud house was damaged with the incessant downpour. His neighbours res-

cued and shifted him to a safer place.

Lowing areas were waterlogged in Pernem taluka and the fish market was flooded too.

Parts of Tiswadi also

witnessed rainfall, more specifically at Batim where people were stranded at various places.

Rain lashed the Cancona taluka for almost an hour flooding roads and reduc-

ing the farmers to tears. Fields loaded with watermelons, vegetables and other pulses were completely destroyed with ryots sustaining losses worth lakhs of rupees.

Talathi punished with compulsory retirement

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a significant ruling, South Goa District Collector Egna Cleetus, has found Talathi Jerry Fernandes, guilty of demanding a bribe and has been penalised with compulsory retirement from government service.

The order, issued by District Collector Egna Cleetus, IAS, emphasises that this decision serves two key purposes. First, it ensures that discipline is maintained within government services, and second, it acts as a deterrent to other government officials who may consider engaging in similar corrupt practices. According to the order, the ruling is designed to highlight the importance of integrity and professionalism within the public service sector.

The case stems from a complaint lodged by Avinash Dias, a resident of Sarzora, with the Directorate of Vigilance, Anti-Corruption Branch. Dias reported that Talathi Jerry Fernandes had demanded a bribe of Rs 10,000 in exchange for expediting a mutation entry concerning a property located in Sarzora.

Fernandes was caught dur-

BRIBERY CHARGES

■ Sarzora resident files complaint, says talathi demanded Rs 10,000 to expedite mutation entry

■ Caught accepting Rs 7,000 in sting operation on June 27

■ District Collector rule talathi's actions amounted to a direct violation of Rule 3 of the Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964

ing a sting operation by the Anti-Corruption Branch on June 27, 2014, where he was seen accepting Rs 7,000 from Dias. Following the arrest, Fernandes was initially suspended, though the suspension order was later revoked.

In the District Collector's ruling, it was stated that Fernandes' actions amounted to a direct violation of Rule 3 of the Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964, which mandates that government employees maintain absolute integrity and devotion to their duties.

The order described Fernandes' actions as a serious breach of conduct, constituting grave misconduct that was unbecoming of a public servant.

Residents for traffic signals at Aquem Power House junction

Team Herald

MARGAO: Concerns over safety and daily congestion have prompted citizens and motorists to call on the traffic department and Public Works Department (PWD) to urgently install traffic signals at the Aquem Power House junction.

Locals say the absence of signal lights has made navigating the busy circle increasingly hazardous, especially with vehicles from multiple directions converging at the spot.

Commuters travelling through the area complain that traffic jams are a routine affair, with snarls stretching all the way to the Rawanfond bridge during peak hours.

According to them, the junction's design—where roads from Davorlim, Aquem, Rawanfond, and the eastern bypass meet—demands stricter regulation, which is currently missing.

One of the most pressing issues, motorists claim, is that vehicles coming down the eastern bypass rarely slow down, let alone stop, when approaching the circle.

Margao's new cyclone shelter to include free dialysis centre

Team Herald

MARGAO: Chief Minister Pramod Sawant underscored the importance of Margao during the inauguration of the multi-purpose cyclone shelter in Aquem Margao, declaring it the second most significant town in Goa after Panjim. He also unveiled a series of upcoming development projects slated for the next year.

Emphasising Margao's rich heritage, Sawant pointed to its numerous historic buildings and assured government assistance in restoring key landmarks, including the old Hosicio Hospital, former municipal buildings, and the renovation of other aged structures like the old collectorate building.

In a major announcement, the CM revealed that one floor of the multi-level cyclone shelter will house a ten-bedded dialysis centre, offering free services to patients from Margao and South Goa. This initiative,

spearheaded by Margao MLA Digambar Kamat, will be managed by the Keshav Seva Sadhana and is expected to ease the growing demand for dialysis facilities in the district.

Sawant further noted that substantial development work has already been undertaken in Margao, with Rs 100 crore allocated per constituency. He confirmed that Kamat has already apprised of various planned projects in Margao for the coming year.

During his address, the Margao MLA took a subtle jab at his critics, urging them to 'open their eyes' and acknowledge the ongoing development works. He highlighted how past complaints about flooding have been resolved following upgrades to Margao's drainage system, including nullahs. Kamat also lauded the CM's decision to regularize 960 municipal workers in the recent budget, terming it a

'masterstroke'.

The CM also stressed the importance of cyclone shelters, mentioning that their construction is funded by the Central Government as part of a broader initiative to bolster infrastructure in all coastal states.

While the upper floors of the shelter will serve the public, the Water Resources Department (WRD), which oversees the facility, will soon inspect the premises to assess how best the facility can be managed.

Later, speaking to the media, CM Sawant assured a 'thorough' inquiry into the recent Betul warehouse blast incident, following concerns raised by local residents who had recently met the South Goa District Collector, who was also present at the event.

He also touched upon plans to make Goa the tourism capital of India with initiatives to boost medical tourism, spiritual tourism etc.

Socorro plateau: The quiet giant sustaining life and resisting change

MARGAO: High above the village, the Socorro plateau rises like a silent guardian—flat, rugged, and alive. At first glance, it may appear unremarkable, especially during the dry months when the grass withers and fades. But come monsoon, the land transforms, cloaked in a green so vibrant it seems to hum with life.



neighbouring villages, including Salvador do Mundo, Pomburpa, Olaulim, and Bastora. "Plateau areas help keep groundwater fresh by preventing saline intrusion," Lobo explains. "But with unplanned development, especially on other plateaus like Porvorim and Kadamba, we're already seeing coastal wells turn salty."

Urbanisation has crept up to Socorro's edges too. Once considered 'wastelands', Goa's plateaus are now prime real estate. Construction disrupts natural drainage, pushing excess water into low-lying fields and increasing flood risk. Garbage, too, has

become a threat—attracting scavenging wildlife and contaminating the soil. "If this pace continues, we'll see less and less of the greenery that exists today," Lobo warns.

His project shines a light on how plateaus, often overlooked, are lifelines. "The plateau supports hundreds of species—plants, fungi, reptiles, birds, mammals. It acts as a natural corridor for wildlife," he says. "It's not just a patch of

Lobo says. "It's a haven for finding solace and wildlife."

The plateau, perched at around 60 metres above sea level, plays a crucial ecological role. Its porous laterite rock acts like a sponge—absorbing rainwater during the monsoon and slowly releasing it through springs and streams. This recharges wells, raises the groundwater table, and provides fresh water to Socorro and seven

land. It's a vital, fragile habitat."

Elsewhere in Goa, the story has already taken a darker turn. The Pilerne-Saligao plateau, converted into an industrial estate in 1994, now houses over 130 units. Local residents complain of toxic fumes and groundwater pollution. Fires, like the one in 2023 at the Berger Becker factory, revealed the risks of putting industry above ecology. Lobo met many people who have seen firsthand the effects of this urbanisation, like Vishnu Naik, who told him about groundwater pollution. "This started five years ago. We protested and got the industrial units shut down, but they reopened after taking superficial measures. The pollution has continued. All the water from the nullah gathers in a pond on my property, which was used for drinking by my cows and other animals. They all died because the water was contaminated. Even the wild boars and monkeys have vanished. All my cashew trees and bamboo, which are my business, have withered away."

For Lobo, the connection to Socorro runs deeper than just environmental concern. "My paternal ancestry is from the village, though my family lived abroad. I felt a bond to the land—and a responsibility to speak for it," he says. "I wanted to share the joy of the outdoors, to get people to care, to see what we're losing."

His Goa Water Stories project brought the Socorro plateau to life, not as an abstract landscape, but as a living story—one still being written.

Goa Water Stories is a collaboration with the Living Waters Museum, the Centre for Public Policy and Governance at the Goa Institute of Management, the Goa University and the Sunaparanta Goa Centre for the Arts.

It's this ever-changing landscape that drew Chayne Lobo, 23, to the plateau. An artist, photographer, and storyteller, Lobo brought the plateau into focus through his participation in the Goa Water Stories project—an initiative exploring the relationship between people and water across the state. His lens captured not just the beauty of Socorro's plateau, but its role as a living system: a place of memory, biodiversity, and groundwater resilience.

"I've been visiting the plateau since I was 16, and there is always something new that unfolds each time I explore its vast landscape,"



Scan the QR code to experience Chayne Lobo's project, 'Socorro - The criticality of plateaus'



HAVE THE TRAFFIC POLICE FORGOTTEN ABOUT THE ANTI- DRUNKEN DRIVING CAMPAIGN?

On Friday, Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant made a statement on traffic fines. He has specifically said that fines will be given only by Police Inspectors during the day and Police Sub Inspectors by night. My question is, are there sufficient number of Police Inspectors to keep tabs on the traffic offences? There are numerous traffic offences. Now they are cracking down on those violating the helmets and seat belts rule. They do check for drunken driving here and there. Now they have been given body cams. But I feel there will be shortage of Police Inspectors to crack down on traffic violations.

— Mariano Ferrao, Social Activist



PANJIM: There appear to be few instances of traffic police checking for drunken driving. Many tourists too are seen drinking and driving. Now with only Police Inspectors and Police Sub Inspectors authorized to fine law breakers, Herald Media asked people, "Have the traffic police forgotten about the anti-drunken driving campaign? Do you see police checking for drunken driving?"

Sometimes it is like a festival, where every 7 or 8 metres they check drivers with alcohol metres. But once the drive is over, they are not to be seen monitor for alcohol. I don't see a single traffic policeman monitoring for alcohol tests. It appears they maybe busy in collecting funds. Or in a lighter vein, do the police want the drivers to drive drunk and die to set an example to others? So do they want those who want to die, to die? Maybe, I don't know. I don't find alcohol tests going on in Goa in the manner in which they should be done.

— Anthony D'Silva, Social Activist

Drunken driving is a serious offence. Do you know how many people are dying due to drunken driving? Police have to be strict with drunken driving. If drivers are found above the permissible limit of alcohol, their licence should be cancelled for a year. I am not aware, I may not be able to answer in an affirmative way whether police are monitoring drivers for drunken driving? But from my experience, I have not seen many policemen doing the breath analyser test for drivers. But that's my observation, but they may be doing it. But in Calangute and the beach belt, you see such reckless driving, every week you see someone dying. It has become a menace. Yesterday someone banged a car into 5 other cars.

— Armando Gonsalves, Founder, Goa ForGiving



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