

Invasive fish wiping out native species from village ponds, lakes

WILLIAM FERNANDES



For years together, we Siolkars would feast on river fish throughout the year, caught from local ponds that were auctioned annually. Mullet, milkfish, perch, prawns, crabs, and various other types of fish were always found in abundance in the rivulet (known locally as Poim) at Marna.

There is an old saying in Siolim that a large mullet (Xevto) could "win" you a court case during the pre-Liberation days — a humorous reference to just how prized the fish was. In those days, young men would spend hours casting nets and fishing in the river, and no one ever returned empty-handed.

Traditional fish curries were lovingly prepared in kudnem (earthen pots), the flavours deepened by slow cooking and local spices. River prawns and crabs were considered delicacies. The lip-smacking Caldin made with Xevto, the traditional Samarachi Kodi prepared with river prawns, and the spicy crab Xec Xec

were enough to tantalise anyone's taste buds.

Sadly, all of this has now become just a memory. River fish have virtually disappeared — it's difficult to spot one even with a microscope. One of the main reasons is the spread of the invasive Tilapia, which has become a significant ecological problem in our warm waters. Whether due to negligence or mismanagement, Tilapia found its way into our ponds and fields through the release of water — deliberately or accidentally — and has since overtaken the ecosystem.

In several states, it has been shown that the blue Tilapia's high density and aggressive nature have resulted in major changes in the native fish community. Their omnivorous and territorial feeding behaviour means they outcompete and even prey upon native species, upsetting the natural balance that once sustained traditional fishing.

A similar tragedy has unfolded in the nearby village of Sodiem, where the huge invasive catfish, locally known as Tigor, has entered our waters through the Tillari canal system. This predator has devastated the freshwater ecosystem, wiping out native species that villagers once depended on during the summer months. The excess catch used to be sun-dried and preserved as Para (pickled fish), a staple during the monsoons when fresh fish was scarce. Now, that practice is fast disappearing, as the Tigor has replaced the native species, and not for the better.

The villagers refuse to touch these invasive fish, considering them scavengers that feed on carcasses of dead animals, which are sometimes dumped into the ponds. What was once a source of pride and sustenance is now a source of disgust. The Tillari, once projected as a lifeline, has turned out to be more of a curse

than a boon. It has destroyed hill-sides, submerged wildlife habitats, and inundated thousands of acres of once-fertile fields, turning them into stagnant swamps.

The ecological consequences are stark, but so are the cultural ones. Fishing wasn't just a livelihood or pastime — it was a part of Siolim's identity. The joy of gathering by the riverbanks, the communal meals, the traditional recipes — all are at risk of fading away. It is high time that the village Biodiversity Committees of Marna and Sodiem come together to address this growing ecological crisis. A comprehensive effort is needed to remove invasive species and reintroduce native ones into the ecosystem. Restoration of the fields, now overrun by swampy growth, must also be a priority. Only then can we hope to revive the balance of nature and restore the traditions that defined our connection to the land and the river.

After HC ruling, will govt walk the talk on land violations?

The recent suo moto Public Interest Litigation (PIL No. 3 of 2024) ruling by the Hon'ble High Court of Bombay at Goa has put the spotlight squarely on the accountability of government authorities. The judgement demands constant vigilance from panchayat secretaries and talathis — but the big question is: will they act in time? All eyes are now on how

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Siolim



politicians respond. Will the state government uphold the court's order, or bow to pressure from violators and loyal supporters? Past trends don't inspire much confidence.

Ironically, one of the worst violators appears to be the government itself. In the once lush fields of Guirim-Socorro, crores were spent building irrigation systems meant to benefit local farmers. Today, those systems lie defunct. Instead of crops, the fields are now landfilled to serve as dumping grounds for construction debris and materials, with large concrete sections for a new flyover lined up on the very lands that soak in the monsoon rains as natural catchment. Low lying fields



have even been acquired to construct houses and rehabilitate people who have lost land for Highway expansion. Should sauce for the goose be sauce for the gander.

The PIL ruling now presents the Collector and Talathi with a crucial op-

portunity: to show the High Court that its order will not be diluted or selectively enforced. Their action — or inaction — will be the first true test of whether this landmark ruling marks a turning point or is just another document gathering dust.

Crack whip on Mapusa vendors deceiving customers with faulty weights

In Mapusa, many local vendors — especially at the bustling Friday market — have been using faulty weights and measures to cheat unsuspecting customers. Just last week, I purchased local pulses and rice from the market, and when I weighed them back at home, I realised I had been blatantly short-changed.

One pod (a standard local measure) of rice, which usually weighs around 800 grams, weighed barely 600 grams. That's a shortfall of 200 grams per measure. At Rs 80 per pod, the loss adds up quickly. It's even worse with Halsande (beans), which cost Rs 300 per pod — meaning customers are being robbed of both quantity and money. Just imagine the scale of this loot and plunder happening week after week in broad daylight.

This isn't just an occasional oversight — it amounts to daylight robbery, and it's high time action is taken.

The Department of Legal Metrology, which is tasked with regulating the use of accurate weights and measures in trade and commerce, must step in immediately. It is their responsibility to ensure that consumers receive the exact weight, measure, and number of any commodity they pay for.

Regular checks and surprise raids should be conducted in markets like Mapusa, especially during peak days like Fridays, to



catch and penalise vendors who knowingly use tampered or faulty measures. Booking these violators under the relevant legal provisions is essential — not only to protect consumers, but also to uphold fair trade practices and discourage dishonest vendors from fleecing the public.

Until such steps are taken with seriousness and consistency, the common man will continue to suffer at the hands of those who profit through deceit.

CITIZEN ANDREA PEREIRA
Pilerne

Garbage overflows around dumpsters placed in Cunchelim

In my neighbourhood at Cunchelim, the garbage bins in a residential area have been overflowing for days, with waste now spilling out onto the roads. A large amount of trash — including plastic bags, bottles, food waste, and other refuse — has been dumped carelessly around the bins, creating an unsightly mess. People often come by, discard their garbage wherever they please, and vanish without a second thought.

CITIZEN SHUBJOY POOJARI
Cunchelim

The scattered debris is a clear indication of poor waste management and a lack of regular garbage collection. The consequences are not just visual — they pose a serious health hazard. Flies constantly swarm the garbage and then make their way to nearby food stalls, vegetables, and meat shops, contaminating whatever they land on. The stench from the rotting waste is nauseating, making it difficult for residents and passersby to even breathe normally.

This situation under-



scores the urgent need for a more effective waste disposal system in Cunchelim. The local authorities must ensure that garbage is collected regularly and that bins are emptied before they begin to overflow. At the same time, stricter monitoring is needed to prevent people from dumping waste illegally.

Equally important is community involvement. Residents need to be made aware of the importance of main-

taining cleanliness and the consequences of poor sanitation. Sensitisation campaigns, door-to-door awareness drives, and clearly marked waste disposal areas can go a long way in keeping the neighbourhood clean.

Improving the situation in Cunchelim will require cooperation between residents and authorities alike. Only by working together can we ensure a cleaner, healthier environment for all.

Cleanliness non-existent in Margao's SGPDA market, driving shoppers away

I'm writing once again to bring to the notice of the South Goa Planning and Development Authority (SGPDA) that there is virtually no garbage collection or clearance at the Margao retail market. The large pile of waste near the fish-cutters' section, behind the fish market, seems to be growing taller and wid-



nauseating mound of garbage?

We want to support our local fisherfolk and vegetable vendors, but the unhygienic and appalling conditions at the Margao market are driving us to choose cleaner, more convenient grocery options via online apps. Is this the government's intention? To slowly discourage the traditional system and push us away from those who have, for generations, been our trusted suppliers of fish, meat, and vegetables?

It's high time the authorities take urgent and sustained action to clean up the market and ensure a basic standard of hygiene for both vendors and consumers.

CITIZEN STELLA FRANCIS
Fatorda

Roadside tree branches should be trimmed on priority



In recent times, due to unpredictable weather conditions, all necessary precautions must be taken to prevent harm or injury, which, in some cases, could even prove fatal to innocent members of the public.

This week, heavy rains and cyclonic winds have caused several trees to be uprooted along the Chorao-Mayem route. In other areas, fallen tree branches have damaged electrical cables, leading to power interruptions and causing inconvenience to residents. Since this is a frequently used route, many commuters from Sanquelim, Bicholim, and nearby areas rely on it to travel to Panjim via the Chorao-Ribandar ferry.

We urge the concerned authorities to take immediate action by trimming overhanging branches along roadside trees to prevent any untoward incidents that may endanger public safety.

CITIZEN SHAMIN SEQUEIRA
Bicholim

Shift MRF centre at Nerul



I was travelling via Nerul towards Panjim one day and was shocked to see the MRF shed been set up next to the Sub-Health centre here. It is really unfortunate that the stinking nuisance is set up in a place where people come to seek treatment. Very often polio doses are administered to children at the health centre and it is really unhealthy to treat little children here as there are high chances of the kids catching infection. All types of garbage is dumped at the site at times and one doesn't know as to what types of infections it can catch. It will be prudent enough if the authorities shift the health centre to a distant and secluded place in the interest of public health. Let better counsel prevail.

CITIZEN PASCOALA SOUSA
Candolim

No bus service from Mapusa to Arpora after 8 pm, commuters stranded

Bus operators on the Mapusa to Calangute route are consistently failing to adhere to scheduled trip timings via Arpora village after 8 PM. As someone who earns a living by selling vegetables at the Mapusa market, I am deeply concerned about this issue and seek an immediate resolution.

Despite lodging complaints with the Regional Transport

Office (RTO) at Mapusa, Bardez, Goa, the problem persists. Instead of following the designated route through Arpora Market, bus operators are taking a shortcut via Nagoa to reach Calangute,

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Mapusa

forcing passengers to walk approximately 1.5 kilometers to Arpora late at night. This ongoing practice is causing significant inconvenience, and despite repeated oral complaints to

the Assistant Director of RTO, no corrective action has been taken.

As the operators have failed to address the issue, passengers have now decided to escalate the matter by submitting a formal written complaint to the RTO in person. They are demanding immediate action against the errant operators or, alternatively, the introduction of Kadamba Transport Corporation (KTC) bus services on this route.

Rusty railings on Telaulim bridge need to be replaced



The Telaulim to Varca bridge in Salcete serves as a vital link for commuters, yet its railings appear to have been neglected, possibly since the time of construction. Several sections have fallen, as seen in the accompanying photograph. In the event of an accident, a victim could plunge directly into the River Sal, making urgent repairs and maintenance critical. The railings must be properly maintained to prevent further corrosion and ensure public safety. Additionally, it is important to

highlight the lack of upkeep at other government facilities, such as the Navelim Panchayat and the Navelim Primary Health Centre — both of which were constructed much later yet already show signs of poor maintenance.

If buildings in my immediate neighborhood are in such a state, one can only imagine the widespread neglect of government infrastructure across Goa. The concerned authorities must take immediate action to address these issues before they lead to serious consequences.

CITIZEN GEORGE FERNANDES
Navelim