

# Bondla Zoo closed for visitors after virus kills five wild cats

Forest Minister fumes at officials, says he was 'kept in the dark'

Team Herald

PANJIM: Goa's only zoological park located within the Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary has been temporarily closed to the public following a suspected viral outbreak that resulted in the deaths of three civet cats and two jungle cats.

Sources revealed that while the animal deaths occurred between March 6 and 9, the official precautionary order to quarantine the premises was issued only on March 30. Consequently, the zoo has remained closed to the public since April 1.



As per guidelines issued by the Central Zoo Authority, when more than one animal death is reported, precautionary measures in-

cluding quarantine must be implemented for a duration of 15 days.

Despite the seriousness of the situation,

**"I have sought an explanation and will take action against the officer concerned. I have asked to find out what had happened, what was the disease. I will see that a note is sent to the Chief Minister seeking immediate action"**

— Vishwajit Rane, Forest Minister

Forest Minister

Forest Minister Vishwajit Rane told reporters that he had not been informed by department officials about the

closure of Bondla Zoo following the fatal incidents involving the animals.

"I have sought an explanation and will take action against the officer concerned. I have asked to find out what had happened, what was the disease. I will see that a note is sent to the Chief Minister seeking immediate action," said Rane.

Following the deaths of the animals, samples have been sent to a laboratory in Bhopal for analysis. No fresh deaths have been reported so far, officials confirmed.

# Anjuna police asleep? Wanted Israeli drug lord had no valid passport or visa to stay in India

Atala's passport expired in 2019; cops now scramble to find how the foreign nationals managed to obtain an Aadhaar

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Anjuna Police — under whose very nose Israeli drug lord Atala was staying comfortably and unnoticed — finally booked him, but only after the Anti-Narcotics Cell (ANC) of the Goa Police alerted them that their "guest" neither held a valid passport nor a visa to remain in India. But the trail of negligence doesn't end there.

The ANC is now probing how the wanted foreign national, who has been arrested by the Goa police as well as the Israeli authorities and Interpol multiple times in the past, managed to obtain an Aadhaar card from a nationalised bank branch in Calangute. On Tuesday, DySP Nerlon Albuquerque and PI Terence Vaz visited the bank and submitted a formal requisition seeking the documents that Atala had submitted to procure the Aadhaar card under the new Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Sources say the bank manager informed police that the bank merely acted as a facilitator for the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), which had posted its officer at the branch to handle

Aadhaar enrolments. As per UIDAI norms, any resident of India who satisfies the verification process can enrol for Aadhaar. But in this case, questions are being raised on how Atala — a foreign national with no valid visa, expired documents, and no legal



stated a police officer.

Atala had given his address at Chapora where he was staying in a rented room.

Sources said that the hotel owner who had provided Atala accommodation did not file the C-Form with the police because the history sheet only provided a photocopy of his Aadhaar card to the owner. Atala had been staying at the hotel in Siolim for the past five months, until April 5, when he was arrested by the ANC police.

Atala had again attempted to flee the country in 2019 after the Anjuna police registered an attempt to murder case against him. But the immigration officials of the Uttarakhand Police apprehended him while trying to sneak into Nepal via the border district in Champawat.

The Banbasa police registered a case against him and was convicted for six months in Uttarakhand. The ANC police have now contacted their Banbasa counterparts to check if they had seized his passport. It may be recalled that the Anti-Narcotics Cell (ANC) on Monday visited the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) office to seek details of Yaniv Bernaim alias Atala after his latest arrest.

stay permissions — slipped through the cracks.

According to police sources, Atala was last seen entering India in 2018, and his passport expired in 2019. Shockingly, he was still able to obtain an Aadhaar card in August 2021 — a move that possibly helped him operate under the radar until now.

"The question of him legally obtaining an Aadhaar Card does not arise and hence we have asked for the details of the person who had processed the file for Atala's Aadhaar Card. We have also written to Net Grid to provide us the travel history besides the validity of Atala's passport,"

# Toddler drowns in open drain at Davorlim

Team Herald

MARGAO: A two-year-old boy drowned after allegedly accidentally falling into an open drain near the Housing Board area in Rumdamol-Davorlim on Monday evening.

The deceased has been identified as Shifan Shokeen Ali, a resident of Rumdamol Davorlim Housing Board and was the only child of his parents.

According to information received from the police, the child was visiting a family friend's residence along with his parents on Monday evening. The friend resides on the second floor of a building in the Housing Board area. While the family members were engaged in conversation, Shifan, who was playing in the gallery of the flat, is believed to have made his way down to the ground level and wandered approximately 15 metres away, where he accidentally fell into a gutter near the building.

Upon receiving information from one Saiesh Desai, who spotted a minor boy floating in the wastewater drain at Rumdamol Davorlim Housing Board,

LPSI Veronica Coutinho and her team from the local police station rushed to the scene. The police conducted a preliminary enquiry and confirmed that the minor boy, Shifan, originally from Sundarpur, Uttar Pradesh, might have accidentally fallen into the drain, which runs alongside his residence.

Police conducted a scene of incident panchanama and, with assistance from local residents, recovered the child's body from the drain. An inquest panchanama was carried out, and the body was subsequently referred for post-mortem examination.

A police surgeon who conducted the autopsy certified the cause of death as "asphyxia as a result of drowning in water". However, the viscera has been preserved for chemical analysis as part of standard procedure.

Initially, police stated that no foul play was suspected by the family. However, it is now learnt that the family has expressed suspicion of foul play, prompting further investigation into the circumstances of the child's death.

## LIFT AND SHIFT



Garbage dumped near the Vidya Prabodhini High School at Alto-Porvorim was cleared by the authorities after O Herald highlighted the issue on April 7

# Rights panel directs Forest Dept to provide crematorium land at Bhati

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Goa Human Rights Commission (GHRC) has recommended that the South Goa Collector, Director of Panchayats, and the Range Forest Officer ensure that 1,500 square metres of land in Survey No. 8/0 of Bhati village be made available to the Bhati Village Panchayat for the construction of a crematorium, within the next 60 days.

The Commission passed the order on Tuesday after hearing a complaint filed by Ketan Dessai of Barazan-Bhati in Sanguem taluka. Dessai, in a complaint dated July 16, 2021, had stated that the land was reserved for a crematorium ground at Congarem-Bhati and urged the authorities to initiate a survey for demarcation of the same. The South Goa Collector, in a reply

dated August 24, 2021, stated that the land under Survey No. 8/0 of Bhati village was in possession of the Forest Department, and that forest officials were not allowing people to enter the property for the burial of dead bodies.

The reply filed by the Director of Panchayats on December 17, 2021, stated that the Bhati Village Panchayat had resolved and proposed the construction of a crematorium in Survey No. 8/0 of Bhati village, via a resolution dated January 15, 2021, and that the proposal had been forwarded to the Revenue Department for the allotment of 1,500 square metres, which is still awaited.

The Commission had added the Range Forest Officer (RFO), Sanguem, and the Bhati Panchayat Secretary as respondents, but they did not file their replies. The two-member Commission, com-

prising Acting Chairperson Desmond D'Costa and Member Pramod Kamat, agreed with the complainant that since the Bhati Village Panchayat had resolved on January 15, 2021, that the crematorium be constructed in Survey No. 8/0 of Bhati village, the said resolution must be enforced to uphold the human rights of the villagers of Bhati.

According to the complainant, the facility for burial and cremation was reserved for the Bhati Village Panchayat in the land bearing Survey No. 8 at Congarem-Bhati. However, the said land was allegedly encroached upon by the Forest Department/Wildlife Sanctuary, leaving the village without a cremation ground. Dessai had urged the Commission to direct the authorities to initiate a survey for demarcation of the said land.

# Notices issued to cops, Old Goa p'yat, over GHRC order violation

Officials fail to act against encroachments on footpaths despite directives

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Goa Human Rights Commission (GHRC) has issued notices to the Director of Panchayats, Se Old Goa panchayat secretary and the Old Goa Police asking them to file their replies latest by April 25, following a contempt of order as alleged by the resident of Vailankanni Apartment and Carl Centre, Old Goa.

On April 1, the resident of Vailankanni Apartment and Carl Centre filed a new complaint seeking action against the Se Old Goa village panchayat for failing to implement its order to remove encroachments on footpaths and committing contempt.

In February this year, the Commission had recommended the Se Old Goa village panchayat to forthwith initiate steps to clear the footpath of stalls and obstructions in front of the Vailankanni Apartments and Carl Centre. It had also asked the Old Goa police to provide the necessary protection.

On March 21, the panchayat secretary

told the Commission that he had cleared the footpath, and matter was disposed.

But the residents have now complained that the panchayat secretary did not clear the footpath, and that the stalls were removed from the footpath by the persons who were running their business in the midnight on March 18 and erected their stalls in the government property bearing survey No. 117.

As per the proceeding dated January 20, 2025, the panchayat secretary and the Old Goa Police were supposed to submit an action taken report within 60 days, but till March 18, the panchayat secretary did bother to act, and sent a letter the residents to verify the footpath.

The Commission disposed of the matter as the panchayat secretary gave in writing that the footpath was cleared but two days later on March 23, all the illegal stalls were put back on footpath, the residents stated alleging that one of the panchayat members was supporting illegal encroachments on footpaths.

# Villagers of Bankal, Kazur continue to wait for bridge as monsoon nears

Lack of connectivity across river causes hardship for over 100 households

GAURESH SATTARKAR

PANJIM: While the government boasts of building highways and bridges criss-crossing the State, the villagers of Bankal and Kazur in the Cavre-Pirla Village Panchayat continue to suffer in silence, awaiting a bridge that has been promised but never delivered.

For years, residents have appealed to successive MLAs—including the current representative—to construct a bridge over the river that separates them from the main road. Yet, no action has been taken on this long-pending and critical demand.

Around 100 households are affected by the lack of a permanent structure. With the monsoon approaching, villagers have once again begun the familiar exercise of constructing a makeshift wooden bridge — something they are forced to do each year in order to stay connected with the rest of the State.

Whether it is children attending school, working professionals, or the elderly needing medical care, all must cross the river to access essential services. For



**"We face difficulties in crossing the river in the absence of a bridge. We cannot take out our vehicles as well."**

— Narendra Gaonkar, resident

**"We face a lot of hardships in the absence of a bridge. Ambulances cannot come to our village even if someone falls sick."**

— Oval Gaonkar, villager

most of the year, the shallow water allows villagers to wade across. However, once the rains begin, the river becomes impassable, cutting them off entirely unless a makeshift bridge is erected.

Residents say they are unable to leave the village



because of their ancestral homes and land. Their sole request is for a proper bridge that could improve their standard of living and offer their children a better future.

"The government encourages people to take up



rain starts, I cannot cross the river. We have no other option—that's why we construct this bridge early."

"We do not have a bridge, however, our entire business and means of livelihood is here. We have our temples and our houses too," he added.

Narendra Gaonkar, another resident, shared, "We face difficulties in crossing the river in the absence of a bridge. We cannot take out our vehicles as well. At this point, I can cross the river, though with difficulty, but once the rain starts, I can-

not. We have requested the MLAs several times that a bridge be constructed over the river, but nothing has happened so far."

Another villager, Oval Gaonkar, highlighted the health risks of their isolation. "We face a lot of hardships in the absence of a bridge. Ambulances cannot come to our village even if someone falls sick," he said.

Despite repeated appeals and growing urgency with every approaching monsoon, the residents' demand for a simple, permanent bridge remains unmet.

**75<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY**  
**Mr. Paulo S. Godinho**  
 Dy. Sarpanch  
 V.P. Panchawadi  
 Ward No. 4  
 Wishes from  
**GODINHO FAMILY & SUPPORTERS OF BADEGAL & MAPA**

**Happy Birthday to our dynamic President**  
**Mr. CLEOPHAS FERNANDES**  
 President of United Baga Kayaking  
 Ex Dy. Sarpanch and member of ward no. 5  
 Village Panchayat Arpora-Nagao  
 From Members of UNITED BAGA KAYAKING  
 Roland Braganza (Secretary UKB)  
 Deniz Fernandes (Treasurer)  
 Ms. Steffi Fernandes Ward member of ward  
 no. 5, Village Panchayat Arpora-Nagao  
 Michael Braganza, Agnelo, Michael Dias, Sheldon, Rocky,  
 Stanley, Gasper, Jude Dias, Antonio, Vishnuprasad, Vincent,  
 Wilson, Melroy, Miguel, Apolino, Dinesh, Alvito, Joe, James.