

Tourism Dept faces heat over failing infrastructure, red tape in shack ops

Team Herald

MARGAO: Shack operators from across Goa met Tourism Department officials in Panjim this week, flagging serious concerns about this season's challenges and offering suggestions for the upcoming one.

The meeting was held in two parts — an initial session with Tourism Director Kedar Naik and a follow-up chaired by Tourism Minister Rohan Khaunte. Both sides described the interaction as a routine consultation to review operations.

Post-meeting, members of the Goa Shack Owners Welfare Society highlighted a range of issues — foremost among them, the increasing threat posed by aggressive stray dogs on beaches.

"Sterilisation alone isn't enough," said one shack owner, acknowledging the ongoing Mission Rabies campaign but demanding parallel action to identify and remove aggressive dogs. "We need a focus on tourist safety."

They also demanded a single-window system for shack



licence approvals, streamlined tax procedures, and clearer regulations.

The operators pushed back against the narrative blaming unlicensed masseurs and hawkers for declining tourist numbers. "Enforcement needs to focus on the real problems," one operator said, pointing instead to illegal touts and prostitution rackets which, they argue, are fleecing tourists and damaging Goa's image.

Infrastructure failings were another flashpoint. Shack owners slammed the deplorable state of public toilets and

changing rooms, with some falling into disuse just a few years after installation. At Baga, they alleged a borewell dug for a government facility has resulted in open sewage discharge, while similar requests from shack owners are denied under CRZ norms.

Tourism Director Naik conceded issues at "one or two locations" but insisted most facilities are operational. He said the department is replacing contractors and enhancing monitoring.

The association also revived a long-pending proposal for a

KEY DEMANDS

Action on aggressive stray dogs: Go beyond sterilisation—identify and relocate dangerous strays threatening tourist safety.

Single-window licence clearance: Scrap the red tape and simplify approvals for shacks.

Fix beach infrastructure: Repair defunct public toilets and changing rooms, especially at high-footfall beaches like Baga.

Tackle real issues: Stop

blaming hawkers—target illegal touts and prostitution rackets harming Goa's reputation.

Revive sewage pipeline plan: Implement shared sewage networks for shacks with metered usage before next season.

Improve beach access: Enhance lighting and walkways, limit vehicle access to protect beach aesthetics.

Stop illegal subletting: Ensure shacks stay with Goan operators—no backdoor handovers to outsiders.

shared sewage pipeline network for beach shacks, an idea first floated by former Environment Minister Nilesh Cabral. Under this, each shack would be metered and charged for usage. Shack owners urged its implementation before the next season.

Access roads and beachfront lighting also came up, with calls for better walkways and limits on vehicle access to reduce overcrowding. "Tour-

ists enjoy walking on and around the beach. We need to preserve that experience," said a member.

While the issue of illegal subletting of shacks was not discussed at this meeting, shack owners reiterated that only Goans should be allowed to operate them. Director Naik confirmed that the department had already initiated action against some violators and would carry out further inspections.

Picnickers to cough up 'refundable deposit' to curb beach littering

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a bid to tackle the recurring garbage problem at Betalbatim beach, the village panchayat has decided to introduce a refundable deposit system for picnickers, aimed at deterring littering and holding visitors accountable for cleanliness.

We are now going to be strict. People must take responsibility for their actions. The beach is for everyone to enjoy, but not at the cost of the environment

— Ilma Dias, Dy Sarpanch, Betalbatim P'yat

The move follows repeated complaints about the beach being left in a filthy state—especially after weekends and holidays—despite the panchayat's ongoing clean-up efforts.

Deputy Sarpanch Ilma Dias expressed frustration over the lack of cooperation from both visitors and the tourism department. "We have been making constant efforts to keep the beach



clean, but it is disappointing to see the same situation repeat itself. The contractor has not even installed dustbins, which is unacceptable," she said.

Earlier this week, residents reported a fresh spate of garbage dumped along the beach, tarnishing the scenic charm of one of Salcete's most popular picnic spots, replete with casuarinas and shaded sand dunes to rest and enjoy a meal.

Under the new system, visitors will be required to pay a deposit upon arrival—refundable only if they leave

the area clean. Littering will result in forfeiture of the amount. To enforce the rule, the panchayat also plans to deploy monitoring staff during weekends and public holidays.

"We are now going to be strict. People must take responsibility for their actions. The beach is for everyone to enjoy, but not at the cost of the environment," Dias warned.

The panchayat hopes the initiative will foster a culture of accountability and help preserve Betalbatim's natural beauty for future generations.

Cong stages women-led protest against LPG hike

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a show of dissent against the rising cost of living, Congress party workers, including a large number of women, staged a protest in Margao on Thursday to oppose the recent hike in LPG cylinder prices.

The demonstrators accused the BJP-led government at the Centre of pushing the common man into financial distress through repeated increases in fuel and essential commodity prices.

Prominent Congress leaders such as Michel Rebello, Zilla Panchayat (ZP) member, Savio Coutinho and others were present at the protest, which saw participation from locals,

party workers, and women activists.

Women protesters, holding empty gas cylinders and banners, highlighted how the LPG price increase was directly affecting daily household budgets. "We are the ones running the kitchens. Every time the cylinder rates go up, it becomes harder to feed our families," one of the protesting women Congress workers said.

Speaking to the media, Congress leaders alleged that the government was 'looting the common people.' "This price hike is yet another blow to the middle class and poor families, who are already struggling with inflation and unemployment," said Savio Coutinho.

KAYAK ESCAPE



Tourists paddle through the serene waters of Baga Creek, surrounded by lush mangroves separating them from the touristy bustle of Baga beach

GFA urges CM to reconsider housie ban, warns of impact on village clubs

Team Herald

PANJIM: Goa Football Association (GFA) President Caitano Fernandes submitted a representation to Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, urging reconsideration of the recent ban on housie activities imposed under the Public Gambling Act, 1976, by the South Goa Collector.

Held during feasts, zattras, and festivals, housie has long been a traditional fundraising tool for clubs, helping sustain grassroots football programmes and community initiatives.

With sponsorships and donations dwindling, income from housie often helps clubs stay afloat. Many of these registered clubs maintain audited accounts and operate transparently, the GFA noted, warning that a sudden ban could jeopardise their existence and damage Goa's footballing ecosystem.



The Chief Minister assured the GFA of his support and acknowledged the need to protect Goa's rich footballing heritage. To build momentum, the GFA has convened a meeting with all affiliated clubs on Monday, April 14, to launch a signature campaign. The petition will be submitted to the South Goa Collector, highlighting the collective concerns of the state's football community.

After housie ban, citizens question inaction on matka

MARGAO: Following the State-wide ban on housie, citizens and social groups have begun voicing strong concerns over the continued and unchecked operation of matka gambling across Goa, accusing authorities of selective enforcement of the law.

"If housie, a low-stakes game played for entertainment, has been banned, then why is matka—known for its deep-rooted gambling network—still running unchecked?" asked Rodney D'Souza, a concerned citizen.

Alvito Fernandes added, "Matka involves lakhs of rupees, but why is there no strict action against this gambling? Some of these counters are operating in full view of police stations."

Set up edu hub at Davorlim: MP Tanavade

MARGAO: Rajya Sabha MP Sadanand Shet Tanavade on Thursday stressed the need to pursue late CM Manohar Parrikar's vision of an education hub at Davorlim. The MP said the project, modelled on the Cujira school complex, must be taken to its logical conclusion.

Tanavade also confirmed that the Scheduled Tribes (ST) Bill, introduced in Parliament, will come up for discussion and approval during the upcoming Monsoon session. Tanavade told reporters that the ST Bill could not be taken up in the recently concluded session due to other pressing legislative matters, including the Wafq Board Bill.

At annual Chrism Mass, priests urged to be humble, inclusive, and available to faithful

Team Herald

MARGAO: The annual Chrism Mass of the Archdiocese of Goa and Daman was celebrated on Thursday at the Se Cathedral, Old Goa, with Archbishop Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrao presiding over the solemn occasion. Auxiliary Bishop Simiao Fernandes, Bishop Emeritus of Port Blair Alex Dias, Vicar General Jose Remedios Fernandes, and priests from across the Archdiocese participated in the ceremony.

The Chrism Mass is a significant event in the liturgical calendar, symbolising the unity of priests with their bishop and the blessing of the holy oils

used throughout the year in sacraments.

Delivering the homily, Auxiliary Bishop Simiao Fernandes reflected on three key virtues of priestly ministry—availability, humility, and inclusivity. "Just as Jesus made himself available to the people, priests must be present for their flock. Like Jesus who washed the feet of his disciples, they must serve with humility and avoid clericalism. They should also be inclusive, reaching out especially to those marginalised by society," he said.

He also urged the faithful to pray for all priests and deacons of the Archdiocese, and for Cardinal

Ferrao, who marked the anniversary of his episcopal ordination.

During the Mass, Cardinal Ferrao blessed the three Holy Oils—the Oil of Catechumens (Oleum Catechumenorum), the Oil of the Sick (Oleum Infirmorum), and the Sacred Chrism (Sacrum Chrisma).

The Chrism mass has special significance as the Bishop expresses his bond with the Priests and all the faithful during the Mass. The priests in their turn resolve to work under the fatherly care and guidance of their Bishop.

The celebration concluded with the release of the Pastoral Diary for the upcoming year.

MAX. TEMP 34.9 °C
MIN. TEMP 27 °C

idharudhar



Housie? You're under arrest for Gambling Act violation!

STREET VOICES

PANJIM: Karnataka has already completed work on the Khalsa project to divert the Mhadei water to the Malaprabha basin, and has started on the second leg, the Bhandura project. Herald Media asked citizens if they believe the government of Goa has completely forgotten about the diversion of the state's lifeline

KARNATAKA BEGINS WORK ON THE BHANDURA PROJECT—HAS THE GOA GOVT FORGOTTEN THE MHADEI ISSUE?

Over the years we have seen that the Goa government is not serious about this issue. They have never handled this issue sensitively. They call Mhadei their mother, but they never fulfilled their obligation towards this mother. The Goa BJP government has given step motherly treatment to Mhadei. Whereas in Karnataka, let any government come to power whether it is BJP, Congress or JD (U), they are all one as far as Mhadei water is concerned. But our government fails or makes sure it fails, as seen over all these years. Now since the Bhandura Project is coming, the Khanapur Bachao Samiti have held a press conference to create awareness amongst farmers in the area, informing them of how serious the situation is, and how they will suffer

— Mahesh Mhambrey, Save Mhadei Save Goa

The Goa government is not serious on the Mhadei issue. The work is on, on the Karnataka and we are urging the government to be vigilant. They had been actively vigilant through PRAWAH, but they no longer do that now. They (Karnataka) have completed Khalsa, they have already done the diversion. Now they are taking up work on Bhandura, which is in the wildlife sanctuary. On Thursday there was a protest in Khanapur, Karnataka, so the question arises is our government is sleeping? Because they made noise, we became aware - but did the Goa Government make any statement on Mhadei?

— Hrudaynath Shirodkar, Save Mhadei Save Goa



I don't think that we can say that the Goa Government has forgotten the Mhadei issue. But, for the Goa government which tom-toms about its 'double engine' sarkar (government), it looks like both the engines are not functioning. Why is the government is not doing enough to trigger the judiciary about the importance of the issue. The other thing we know is that our justice system is so slow that even if the operation is successful, the patient dies. The Goa government should move with such determination by convincing the judiciary that this is a matter of life and death for the people of Goa

— Trajano D'Mello, Political Commentator

'MMC Chairperson hiked sanitation fee in 2023'

Team Herald

MARGAO: Continuing his tirade against what he called "blatant lies" by the MMC Chairperson, Shadow Council for Margao has exposed that it was Damodar Shirodkar himself who approved the increase in sanitation fees for residential premises—from Rs 600 to Rs 900—in April 2023.

However, the Chairperson reacted stating everything was done according to the law and nothing illegal.

"During our meeting with the Chairperson a day before, Shirodkar confidently claimed that the fee hike had been implemented during the previous Council's tenure," Savio Coutinho said. "However, after a quick check, it became clear that the hike was introduced under Shirodkar's own leadership."