

Konkan railway urges caution as illegal crossings claim 2 lives

Locals decry lack of safety measures preventing people from attempting to cross the tracks, while rly officials insist responsibility lies with the victims who break the rules

Team Herald

MARGAO: With two tragic deaths on the railway tracks—one at Margao Railway Station and another at the Utorda railway crossing—concerns about safety around railway lines in South Goa have resurfaced.

However, railway officials maintain that the accidents are a direct result of public negligence and unauthorised track crossings, despite repeated warnings and awareness campaigns.

In the span of just a few days, both victims lost their lives in separate incidents under similar circumstances: attempting to cross the railway tracks at unauthorised points. The back-to-back fatalities have sparked public debate about the ad-

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— Baban Ghatge, spokesperson, KRCL

equacy of safety measures, but authorities insist the responsibility lies with individuals who ignore basic safety norms.

Speaking to *O Herald*, Baban Ghatge, Senior Officer of Konkan Railway, strongly emphasised that such incidents are preventable. "These accidents are entirely due to negligence. Trespassing on the railway track is an offence, and despite knowing this, people continue to risk their lives by crossing at unauthorised points," he said.

"There are authorised

railway crossings provided for public use, and people must use them. We've put up signs, warnings, and barriers in many areas, yet people still attempt to take shortcuts," he added.

The incident at Margao Railway Station involved a young man who reportedly tried to jump from a moving train and met with an accident. In the case at Utorda, a local woman is believed to have been attempting to reach the other side quickly, unaware of an oncoming train due to noise distractions and poor visibility.

Local residents, while shocked by the incidents, admit that track crossing has become a common and dangerous habit in many areas. "People are in a rush. They want to save a few minutes, but they're risking their lives. And sadly, many only realise the danger when it's too late," said Chris Cruz, a resident of Utorda.

Railway authorities say they are doing their part. In addition to warning signs, public awareness drives have been conducted in schools, community halls, and local markets. Some areas have even installed fencing to prevent access to the tracks, but gaps remain—literally and figuratively.

Safety activists believe

there needs to be a combination of stricter enforcement and better infrastructure. "There are places where foot overbridges or underpasses could genuinely help reduce illegal crossings," said one safety campaigner. "But enforcement and education are just as important. People need to understand that they're putting themselves and others at risk."

In the wake of these incidents, Konkan Railway is reportedly reviewing safety protocols and may look into enhanced surveillance and fencing in vulnerable zones.

As Baban Ghatge puts it, "The railway track is not a footpath. People must treat it with the seriousness it deserves. A moment's carelessness can cost a life."

Jharkhand man arrested for raping his two minor nieces in Gogol

Team Herald

MARGAO: A 51-year-old native of Jharkhand was arrested by Fatorda police on Friday, for allegedly raping his two minor nieces. The two girls, aged 8 and 9 years old, were entrusted to his care by their mother, who was away for work.

The victims' mother lodged a complaint with the Fatorda police, providing details of the sexual abuse, which has allegedly gone on for a prolonged period. According to the police, the investigation is ongoing, and several statements have been recorded. The offence has been registered under Section 64, 351 r/w 3(5) of the BNS Act 2023, Sections 4 and 8 of the POCSO Act, and Section 8(2) of the Goa Children's Act.

The mother, a native of Bijapur, Karnataka, stated in her complaint that the accused repeatedly sexually assaulted her daughters between March and

The mother of the two girls, aged 8 and 9, had left them in their 51-year-old uncle's care while she had to travel for work

April. The incidents reportedly occurred in a rented room within the jurisdiction of Fatorda Police Station and at various open locations in Fatorda. The accused allegedly threatened the girls with dire consequences if they disclosed the abuse to anyone.

The police revealed that the accused had been touching the victims inappropriately while collecting them from school and had issued death threats to silence them. Both minors have undergone medical examinations, and a detailed report is awaited. The accused will also undergo a medical examination as part of the investigation.

PIETY AND PENANCE



Devotees line up to venerate a statue depicting Jesus Christ on the cross, some kissing the feet in mourning, at a Good Friday service at Don Bosco shrine in Panjim

Tough cuts: Caterers, restaurateurs in turmoil as beef supply dries up

Team Herald

MARGAO: With the Lenten season drawing to a close and people gearing up for a flurry of weddings, feasts, and community gatherings—particularly among the Catholic community—a shadow looms large over the celebrations. An acute shortage of beef in local markets has thrown the hospitality industry into turmoil.

From popular restaurants to well-established catering services, business owners are facing unprecedented challenges. The beef supply crisis has not only disrupted operations but also forced many to rethink menus and revise prices—moves that are alienating regular customers and putting livelihoods at risk.

John Fernandes, who runs a family-owned restaurant in the heart of Varca, said the situation is worsening by the day.

"We've always served traditional Goan dishes, and beef items like beef chilli fry, beef xacuti, and steaks were our top sellers, especially with tourists and

Customers think we are trying to make extra profits, but they don't see what's happening behind the scenes. We can't serve dishes at a loss, so either we remove them or charge more. But with competition and the tourist season slowing down, that's not sustainable

—Justinho Pereira, restaurant owner, Majorda

local customers alike," he said. "But now, either we can't get the meat at all, or it's so expensive that we can't afford to keep it on the menu. Business is down, and I'm afraid it'll only get worse as the wedding season approaches."

John isn't alone. Across Salcete and neighbouring talukas, caterers are scrambling to make last-minute changes to pre-planned menus as beef becomes harder to procure. Santano D'Souza, a caterer based in Raia who handles a significant number of Catholic weddings and church feasts, said his team had to completely remove beef dishes

from upcoming events. "We've already confirmed several bookings for May and June, but now we're calling clients and explaining that we can't serve beef," he explained. "Most of them understand, but some are disappointed. Beef roast and tongue masala are traditional staples at Goan Catholic weddings—it's not just food, it's part of the culture."

According to local sources in the meat trade, the supply crunch stems from multiple factors, including disruptions in inter-state cattle transport, stricter enforcement of animal transportation laws, and reduced availability from traditional suppliers.

A local butcher in Margao, who preferred not to be named, said, "We used to get regular supplies from Karnataka, but that's been inconsistent lately. And when the stock does arrive, prices are through the roof."

Indeed, the cost of beef has spiked dramatically. This leaves both small eateries and large catering operations struggling to make ends meet.

Crackdown on illegal housie games in Salcete

Team Herald

MARGAO: Authorities in South Goa have launched a crackdown on illegal housie games, following fresh orders from the district administration.

Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) of Margao, Ramesh Gaonkar, has instructed all police stations in Salcete taluka to seize promotional material and take legal action against organisers running events without authorisation.

The directive follows a memorandum issued by South Goa District Magistrate Egna Cleetus, who flagged concerns over the

It has been observed that several posters, banners, and advertisements promoting such activities are being publicly displayed within the jurisdiction of Salcete. These promotional materials by various organisers blatantly violate the provisions of the said Act

—Ramesh Gaonkar, Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) of Margao

growing number of unauthorised gambling events. The memo noted that housie games were being widely promoted through posters, banners, and advertisements in public spaces—a clear violation of the Goa Public Gambling Act, 1976.

The SDM has directed police stations in Margao, Maina-Curtorim, Verna, Colva, Cuncolim, and Fatorda to treat the matter as

"most urgent" and act without delay.

"It has been observed that several posters, banners, and advertisements promoting such activities are being publicly displayed within the jurisdiction of Salcete. These promotional materials by various organisers blatantly violate the provisions of the said Act," the SDM stated in the order.

Davorlim locals demand flyover as rly gate delays hit school, work travel

Team Herald

MARGAO: Residents of Davorlim and Dicapale, two neighbouring villages, have voiced growing frustration over frequent and prolonged delays caused by the railway crossing gate, particularly during peak hours when students and office-goers are commuting.

According to locals, the delays often last several minutes—or even longer—causing significant disruptions to daily routines and leading to traffic congestion in the area.

The situation has become especially difficult during the morning and evening rush hours, when frequent train movements result in long queues of vehicles waiting for the gates to open.

Parents have expressed concern about the impact on school-going children, with many students arriving late to class due to the delays. Similarly, office workers are often late reaching their workplaces, raising concerns about productivity losses and added stress to the daily commute.

In light of these ongoing issues, villagers are now calling for the construction of a flyover at the railway crossing. The proposed flyover would allow vehicles and pedestrians to bypass the crossing, avoiding long waits and easing traffic flow. "Infrastructure improvement would not only alleviate the inconvenience



Residents are also calling for temporary measures to reduce the inconvenience—such as improving the timing of railway signals, adding additional gates, or providing alternate routes during peak hours

caused by the delays but also enhance the overall flow of traffic in the area," said Ravi Shirodkar, a local resident.

"The long waits at the crossing have become unbearable. It's especially frustrating when we're trying to get our kids to school or get to work on time," said another resident, who asked to remain anonymous.

Local leaders have also voiced support for the flyover proposal, citing the need for improved infrastructure to meet the growing demands of the area's residents. With the popu-

lation steadily increasing and the number of vehicles on the roads rising, the railway crossing has become a major bottleneck, further worsening traffic congestion in the region.

Residents are also calling for temporary measures to reduce the inconvenience—such as improving the timing of railway signals, adding additional gates, or providing alternate routes during peak hours.

"We don't want to wait for years for a permanent solution," said Herculano Dias, another resident. "Even a small improvement would go a long way in helping us get through our daily lives without so much hassle."

For now, the community remains hopeful that their voices will be heard, and that a long-term solution, such as the proposed flyover, will eventually be implemented to improve their daily commute and overall quality of life.

HC sets May 8 deadline for mapping Margao's sewerage network

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Goa bench of the Bombay High Court has directed a core committee tasked with addressing sewage discharge in Margao to prepare a comprehensive map identifying areas within the jurisdiction of the Margao Municipal Council (MMC) that are connected to the sewerage system and those that remain unlinked. The map, which is to be prepared in coordination with the Public Works Department (PWD), the Sewerage and Infrastructural Development Corporation of Goa Ltd (SIDCGL), and MMC itself, must be submitted by

In an affidavit submitted to the Court, the amicus curiae sought a series of directives to ensure compliance:

- De-sealing violators' premises only after verification of sewage connection or working soak pit.
- Seal 16 commercial structures listed in April 1 affidavit within a week.
- Finish show cause adjudications for residential premises by May 15.
- Wrap up hearings (pages 1166–1175 of the case file) by June 1.
- Ensure compliance with the Court's earlier order dated November 19, 2024.
- PWD and SIDCGL should act immediately to stop untreated sewage discharge, especially in unconnected or topographically challenged areas.

May 8. The directive was issued during the latest hearing in a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) concerning con-

tamination of Salpem lake which is based in Navelim, filed by Prof Antonio Alvares. The Court observed that a detailed visual map

would not only assist the committee in its efforts but also equip the municipality with a clearer overview of existing gaps in sewerage coverage.

Alongside the mapping exercise, the High Court expects the core committee to convene in the first week of May to chart out further steps, particularly in relation to sewage discharge in low-lying zones. These decisions will be guided by a feasibility report currently being prepared by the PWD and expected to be submitted by the end of April.

During the proceedings, the MMC's legal counsel presented an affidavit outlining the municipal

body's plan to take forward the process of de-sealing premises that were earlier closed due to violations. The affidavit detailed the approach for adjudicating notices already issued to 16 commercial and 154 residential structures.

The Court was also apprised of a prior survey conducted to evaluate the potential introduction of vacuum sewerage technology—a fully automated system suitable for regions with high water tables and spatial constraints. However, the amicus curiae pointed out that progress on this front has stalled, with the PWD yet to finalise its feasibility assessment.



The Central Government has given an NOC for a private jetty at Malim. In this context, Herald Media asked people if they fear it will be converted into a marina?

WHAT IS YOUR REACTION TO THE PROPOSED PRIVATE JETTY AT MALIM?

The recent announcement that a jetty is coming up at Malim has suddenly created confusion in the minds of the people, especially those living on the banks of the Mandovi River. The confusion begins at the doorsteps of the government. Government blames the people because they stand up and oppose everything. How can we blame the people of Goa when the government does not take the stakeholders and the public at large into confidence and explain what exactly is the plan and the programme of the government? Government has to explain this jetty is for luxury boats, how many boats would be there. Where would the fuel be discharged. All these things need to be explained



Watch Street Voices on Herald Media on YouTube by scanning the QR code

This online NOC which has been given for a private jetty in river Mandovi, will destroy our inland waterways. This is part of the Sagarmala project and this is the start of destruction. Our mountains, fields and khazans have been destroyed. Now they have started with the waterways. First they brought in casinos, then they have diverted Mhadei so salt water will come in and then the sewage and the dirt. Those on the banks will certainly be affected by the jetty and the Sagarmala project

— Tara Kerkar, social activist