

Two children mauled in a week: Goa govt scrambles to curb dog attacks

Citizens demand long-term strategy to bring down stray dog population; State authorities urge panchayats and municipalities to establish dog shelters, sterilise strays to address aggression

Team Herald

MARGAO: In the wake of a series of disturbing stray dog attacks in South Goa — including the grisly mauling of a 15-month-old baby who died from her injuries, and a recent incident involving a Russian child — concerned citizens and local authorities are calling for urgent action to manage the growing stray dog population.

The first incident, which shook the quiet locality of Durgabhat in Ponda, involved the brutal death of a Anabiya Shaikh, just over a year old, who was attacked by a pack of stray dogs. Eyewitnesses reported that the child had briefly wandered out of her house while waiting for her mother to accompany her to Friday prayers, when she was suddenly mauled by the dogs.

Just days after this heart-breaking incident, another attack was reported at Batalbatim beach. A six-year-old Russian girl was injured after being bitten by a stray dog while playing near the shore. Lifeguards stationed nearby quickly intervened and rescued the girl, averting a potentially more serious outcome.

Responding to the mounting pressure, authorities are now accelerating efforts to address the issue on a war footing. Srinet Kothwale, Additional Collector-I, confirmed that the administration is in the process of signing Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with local governing bodies to facilitate the creation of dedicated dog shelters across villages and towns in Goa.

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BREEDING TROUBLE

Animal welfare activists have for decades been pushing the Goa government to invest more time and resources into sterilisation and garbage management, which are the only methods proven effective to control the stray dog population and minimise attacks on humans, as well as the suffering of the animals

It should be mandatory to sterilise all pet dogs — nobody should be allowed to let their dogs breed, as the high population of strays are a direct consequence of irresponsible humans abandoning entire litters of puppies on the streets, and in markets

Goa CM Pramod Sawant announced in February that the State Cabinet has approved a ban on Rottweiler and Pitbull dog breeds. The government plans to amend the Goa Animal Breeding and Domestic Regulations and Compensation Ordinance, 2024, to prohibit the sale, import, and breeding of these two breeds

REASONS FOR WORRY

Tourism impact: Attacks, especially those involving tourists in beach areas like Batalbatim, could potentially impact Goa's image as a safe tourist destination — especially amongst international visitors

Population growth of strays: Without consistent sterilization and sheltering efforts, the stray dog population continues to grow, escalating the risks to public safety.

Behavioural changes: Some officials suggest that behavioural shifts among stray dogs, and 'pack mentality' may be contributing to the increase in attacks, indicating a need for both medical and behavioural intervention

by the Animal Husbandry Department under which financial assistance is provided to local bodies to establish dog shelters. We are urging all village panchayats and municipalities to take advantage of this scheme and help tackle the problem collectively," said Kothwale.

He added that, in addition to sheltering, authorities are placing significant emphasis on vaccination and sterilization as long-term strategies to reduce aggressive behaviour and control the stray dog population. As of April 19, nearly 562 stray dogs have been sterilised

across areas from Cavellissim to Fatrade, he revealed.

Dixon Vaz, Sarpanch of the Cavellissim village panchayat, who has been vocal about the issue, stressed the importance of establishing large, professionally-managed shelters.

"The only viable solution is to have two major dog shelters — one in North Goa and one in the South — similar to Gaushalas. Last year, we submitted a draft plan to the Animal Husbandry Department proposing such a facility in the South, and now it needs to be implemented," Vaz said.

He emphasized the need for NGOs and animal welfare organizations to be involved in the daily operation of these shelters, including the provision of food, water, medical treatment, and care for the dogs.

"Sterilization and vaccination are crucial in the long run, but we need immediate, tangible solutions. Right now, no one is taking full responsibility for these dogs, and their numbers continue to rise," Vaz warned.

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Yet again, SGPDA misses sopo tender deadline for wholesale fish market

Claims it has delayed the move to conduct study on local fishers' demands

Team Herald



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MARGAO: The South Goa Planning and Development Authority (SGPDA) has once again failed to meet the deadline to float the sopo fee collection tender for the Margao wholesale fish market.

Meanwhile, concerns are being raised by stakeholders regarding illegal trading activities taking place outside the market complex with no apparent enforcement or monitoring. This not only disrupts legitimate business inside the complex but also affects revenue generation and hygiene in the surrounding areas.

Despite assurances from SGPDA Chairman Krishna alias Daji Salkar that the tender process would be initiated by 15 April, citing readiness with all procedural requirements, the authority has now delayed the move in order to conduct a study on the demands made by local Goan fishermen.

At a recently held SGPDA board meeting, members unanimously decided to postpone the tender and instead prioritise a detailed study into the proposal for a one-time rate specifically for Goan fishermen. This demand diverges from the regular sopo (fee) rates currently applied to fish traders operating in the market.

"We are not going back on our commitment, but the demand from local fishermen to allow

them to sell at a fixed one-time rate has to be looked into seriously. Hence, we are compelled to delay the tender until the study is completed," said Chairman Salkar.

While the delay is being justified on administrative grounds, the situation on the ground tells a different story. Illegal and unregulated trading outside the market complex continues to thrive, with no apparent enforcement or monitoring. This not only disrupts legitimate business inside the complex but also affects revenue generation and hygiene in the surrounding areas.

The wholesale fish market in Margao has long struggled with issues related to fee collection, regulation of vendors, and infrastructure management. The sopo tender, which authorises a private contractor to collect market entry and usage fees, plays a crucial role in maintaining market discipline and ensuring a steady stream of revenue for the SGPDA.

However, delays in floating the tender have become a recurring issue. The current postponement marks yet another missed deadline, raising concerns about governance and planning inefficiencies.

MMC fails to lower Nat'l Flag amidst State mourning for Pope, blames circular delay

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Margao Municipal Council (MMC) came under fire on Tuesday after the National Flag on the MMC building remained hoisted at full mast, despite both Central and State governments officially declaring a period of mourning to mark the death of Pope Francis.

The oversight drew sharp criticism from the opposition, with Congress functionary Savio Coutinho openly condemning the municipal administration for failing to follow proper protocol.

According to Coutinho, the National Flag was visibly flying at full mast during the mourning period, which he stated was a blatant disregard for the solemnity of the occasion and an act of disrespect towards the departed spiritual leader.

"It was publicly announced by the govern-



ment that the nation would observe mourning following the death of Pope Francis," said Coutinho. "By failing to lower the national flag to half mast, it appears that the Margao Municipal Council is showing a lack of respect for this period of national grief."

Reacting to the criticism, Chief Officer of Margao Municipal Council, Melvyn Vaz, provided clarification on the matter. He acknowledged that there had been a brief delay in receiving the official government circular regarding the mourning protocol. However, he stressed that once the circular was received, immediate action was taken to

lower the flag to half mast in compliance with the government's directive.

"There was some confusion initially due to a delay in communication regarding the circular," explained Vaz. "But as soon as the instructions were officially received, the flag was lowered to half mast. I have already explained the situation to the Collector's office."

Despite this explanation, the issue has sparked a wider debate about institutional accountability and the importance of timely adherence to official protocols, particularly during periods of national or state mourning.

Requiem Mass for Pope at Se Cathedral on Thursday

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Archdiocese of Goa and Daman has announced a special requiem mass in memory of Pope Francis, to be held this Thursday at the historic Se Cathedral Church in Old Goa.

His Eminence Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrão will preside over the memorial service, scheduled for 9 a.m. on April 24. The Archdiocese has extended an invitation to priests, religious orders, and the lay faithful to participate in the service and offer prayers for the deceased Pontiff.

As a mark of respect, offices at the Bishop's House will remain closed on Saturday, April 26, coinciding with Pope Francis' funeral in Vatican City.

Sources from the Church of Goa confirmed that Cardinal Ferrão is expected to depart on Friday to attend the Pope's funeral in Rome. The Cardinal will also participate in the subsequent papal conclave to elect the new Pope.

Cansaulim-Arossim locals reject railway overbridge plan, push for underpass

Team Herald

MARGAO: Residents of Cansaulim-Arossim have strongly opposed the proposed Rs 100 crore Road Over Bridge (RoB) project at Level Crossing 25 (LC25) in Arossim, warning of potentially disastrous consequences. Locals claim several heritage houses in the vicinity risk demolition and demand authorities rethink the project before causing irreversible damage to the area's historical fabric.

On Tuesday, Mormugao Deputy Collector Bhagwant Karmali, accompanied by railway officials and villagers, conducted a site inspection of the proposed area, which reportedly passes through private properties. The Railways have proposed to construct a flyover with a width of 10.5m commencing at Mathany Saldanha circle at Cansaulim and landing at Dr. Proto Barbosa Road at Arossim.

The project includes slip roads with widths of 15m to 20m on both ends of



the approach roads, with earthen embankments measuring 163m in length at Cansaulim and 67m at Arossim. These slip roads would significantly impact compounds and, in some cases, even encroach upon entrance steps and balconies of heritage houses along both sides of the existing road.

Residents expressed widespread resentment, arguing that beyond causing noise, dust, and vibrations in thickly populated settlement areas, they would be effectively confined to their residences due to heavy traffic flow on the slip roads. Many believe this development would be

detrimental to the future of the two adjoining villages.

In response to increased coal-laden rail rakes and resulting traffic congestion at LC25, NGO Goencho Ekvott has proposed an alternative solution: an underpass opposite the government primary school adjacent to Level Crossing 25. This underpass would be designed with sufficient width and height to accommodate emergency vehicles like fire brigades, ambulances, standard height buses, and other heavy vehicles, while also providing safe pedestrian crossings.

This alternative has gained acceptance among most residents in the area,

including those who would be directly affected by the proposed underpass. When railway officials raised concerns about potential water logging, villagers dismissed these as unfounded, pointing to India's engineering capabilities that have successfully delivered undersea tunnels in challenging environments.

Founder Member of Goencho Ekvott, Orville Dourado Rodrigues, and local Congress leader Olenio Simoes guided villagers during the inspection, advocating for a solution that would minimize inconvenience to local residents while alleviating traffic jams and supporting the coastal tourism industry, which serves as the backbone of the local economy.

The Deputy Collector appeared receptive to these concerns and stated he would send appropriate recommendations from the administration to the railways. However it remains to be seen if the same will be accepted.



PANJIM: There was a violent robbery at the posh location of Nagalli Hills, Dona Paula. There have also been major drug hauls in the State. Herald Media asked citizens if they believe this surge in brazen crimes reflect a complete breakdown of law and order in Goa

DO ROBBERIES AND DRUG PEDDLING SIGNAL COLLAPSE OF LAW AND ORDER IN GOA?

There is no law and order in Goa. It is shameful to say that in such a small state, with a population of just 15 lakh, we are unable to maintain law and order. It is a disgrace for the elected representatives, the Home Minister, and the police. What are they doing? Gangs are entering houses, robbing and assaulting people. There are murders, rapes, and even attacks on young children. Recently in Siolim, a significant quantity of drugs was seized. How is this happening? It is happening because of the power wielded by the elected representatives and the police force. They are all involved in this. We have known this countless times before
— Cecille Rodrigues, Resident, Dona Paula

The law and order situation in Goa has deteriorated to such an extent that it hasn't just collapsed — it has become a joke. Serious crimes are taking place, yet the authorities continue to pretend that nothing is happening. There is now a palpable sense of fear among citizens. Senior citizens are afraid to stay alone in their homes, as they feel utterly unprotected. People are keeping ferocious dogs not out of preference, but because they have lost faith in the system meant to protect them. As for the drug menace — it has become a source of revenue. It is revenue not just for the cartels, but, many believe, for those in power. Authorities occasionally showcase symbolic raids where drugs worth Rs42 crore or Rs 11 crore are seized, but the reality on the ground tells a different story. Massive drug cartels continue to operate freely along the coastal belt. Tourism is on the decline, and drugs now appear to be the fastest-growing revenue stream. That, more than anything else, should worry us all
— Mariano Ferrao, social activist

The duty of the government is not only to detect crime after it happens, but more importantly, to prevent it through effective intelligence and proactive measures. In this context, the recent robbery at the residence of an influential industrialist family in Dona Paula is deeply shocking — particularly as it occurred despite the presence of a watchman outside the house. This incident has sent shivers down the spines of Goans. If one is not safe even with a watchman at the gate and regular police patrols in a prestigious locality like Dona Paula, it defies understanding and imagination. Why are thieves, drug peddlers, and murderers growing bolder? Many believe that drug peddlers, in particular, enjoy protection from those in power. This cannot be allowed to continue
— Trajano D'Mello, Political Commentator

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Denial of admission to children with disabilities a punishable offence, State warns schools

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a strong move, the Department for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in Goa has issued a directive to educational institutions across the state, warning against the denial of admission to children with disabilities, emphasizing that such actions constitute a violation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016.

In the official memorandum issued recently, the department expressed concern over continuing complaints—despite previous circulars—regarding institutions refusing

admission to students with disabilities.

The memorandum stated, "All institutions are directed to ensure full compliance with the mandates under the Act. Any act of denial or discrimination will be treated as a serious offence and dealt with under Section 89 of the RPwD Act."

This directive reinforces the government's commitment to inclusive education and equal opportunities for differently-abled children throughout Goa. The referenced Section 89 of the RPwD Act provides legal recourse against institutions that fail to comply with these important protections.