

Parents alarmed as tobacco sale near Margao schools continues unchecked

Sale of tobacco is prohibited within 100 yards of a school; parents say lack of regular monitoring is endangering their children; point out that shop sealed a few months ago is back in business

Team Herald

MARGAO: Despite previous enforcement action and clear legal prohibitions, the illegal sale of tobacco products near schools in Margao continues unabated — fuelling widespread concern among parents and citizens who warn that authorities are failing to protect students from harmful exposure and addiction.

The issue has returned to the spotlight after a shop, previously sealed by officials for violating anti-tobacco laws, was once again found selling tobacco products close to a school.

In February this year, enforcement authorities seized tobacco items worth Rs 1.5 lakh from the same establishment. Although the shop had been shut down at the time, locals report that it has since resumed operations and con-

UP IN SMOKE

Police in South Goa booked 5,224 cases under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), in 2024, a sharp rise from the 3,924 cases registered in 2023.

CITIZENS ARE CALLING FOR

- Routine inspections around all educational institutions
- Heavier penalties for repeat offenders
- Installation of CCTV



cameras near school premises
■ Awareness campaigns targeting students and parents to educate them about the dangers of tobacco products- especially vapes

tinues to sell tobacco in defiance of the law, raising serious concerns about the consistency and follow-through of enforcement in the area.

Worried parents have stepped forward, stating that the unchecked sale of such products near schools is endangering children and teenagers. They allege that the

absence of regular monitoring has emboldened shopkeepers to flout the law with impunity.

"No regular checks on the shops located near educational institutions have encouraged the shop owners to continue this activity," said Rina D'Souza, a parent and resident of Margao. "The easy access to these products is drawing stu-

dents towards them, putting their health and future at risk. There is an urgent need for authorities to carry out regular raids and ensure strict compliance."

Echoing this, another parent, Amriz Fernandes, said, "Many times, school-going boys are seen standing near such shops during break time, often smoking or buying tobacco products. This is a serious issue that needs immediate attention."

Under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003, the sale of tobacco products is strictly prohibited within 100 yards of any educational institution.

Violations are punishable with fines and even imprisonment, and authorities are mandated to conduct regular inspections to ensure adherence.

When contacted, Additional Collector-I Srinet Kothwale acknowledged the issue and said

that enforcement agencies had already been directed to take immediate and sustained action.

"The district administration is taking this matter very seriously. We cannot allow our students to fall prey to tobacco addiction. Regular checks are being conducted, and further steps will be taken as necessary," he stated.

Despite these assurances, parents and concerned citizens argue that the existing measures are falling short. They are calling for a more robust, transparent, and continuous enforcement strategy.

Community leaders also stress that the responsibility must be shared. "It's not just the job of the police or the administration," said a local social worker. "Parents, schools, and local NGOs need to work together to keep our children safe."

Restore power supply for Sancoale resident, HC directs Goa govt

Team Herald

MARGAO: The High Court of Bombay at Goa on Thursday directed the State government to restore electricity supply to a Sancoale resident, after it was disconnected by the South Western Railway (SWR) during its double tracking work.

The petitioner, Nora P. Noronha E. D'Costa, has alleged that the SWR is encroaching on her private property.

The Court clarified that the reconnection is subject to the final outcome of the ongoing encroachment case. It also directed the Inspector of Survey and Land Records, City Survey, Vasco, to verify the demarcation of the area and correlate it with the plan submitted by the SWR.

The City Survey Office had earlier submitted a demarcation report dated 25 March 2025. The report stated that the existing points on the ground were found to be accurate as per the official survey plan.

Although the property at HOLLANT, Sancoale, was demarcated in line with the survey plan, the SWR has been accused of undertaking works on land that forms part of

the same survey number, prompting concerns over potential encroachment.

Appearing for the SWR, Deputy Solicitor General of India Pravin Faldessai informed the Court that the railways had halted the proposed works and would approach the Directorate of Settlement and Land Records (DSLRL), City Survey, with relevant plans to prove that the railway project does not pass through the petitioner's land.

The Court has now asked the DSLR to examine the railways' grievance against the current survey report and submit its findings within two weeks, including any discrepancies, if found.

Representing the petitioner, senior advocate S S Kantak argued that the site contains coconut trees and saplings, which require regular watering. He claimed that the disruption of electricity had affected the water supply, placing the trees at risk. He urged the Court to grant a temporary electricity connection, which would enable the irrigation system to be used to water the plants. The matter has now been posted for further hearing on May 7.

Sancoale woman petitioned the High Court against the South Western railways, alleging land encroachment during double tracking work

Electricity prices likely to be hiked for 3 years

5.95% tariff hike proposed, public hearing on May 9, consumers may give feedback within 21 days

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Electricity Department has proposed an overall power tariff hike of 5.95% across consumer categories for the financial year 2025-26, under the Multi-Year Tariff (MYT) framework submitted to the Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission (JERC).

According to the department's petition, further hikes of 5.64% and 4.88% are proposed for the fiscal years 2026-27 and 2027-28, respectively. No tariff increases are planned for the financial years 2028-29 and 2029-30.

For domestic consumers, the proposed revision includes an increase of Rs 0.60 per kW per month in fixed charges, and an energy charge hike ranging from

Rs 0.06 to Rs 0.35 per kWh, depending on consumption slabs. The department estimates a revenue gap of Rs 408.76 crore for FY 2025-26, with projected revenue at Rs 3,081.97 crore against a net requirement of Rs 3,490.73 crore.

Two petitions have been submitted—one seeking approval of the Business Plan for the 4th MYT Control Period (FY 2025-30), and another for the true-up of FY 2023-24 and tariff determination. The petitions are available on the websites www.jerc.gov.in and www.goaelectricity.gov.in.

Public objections and suggestions may be submitted within 21 days, in advance of the public hearing scheduled on 9 May 2025 at 10 am at the Institute Menezes Braganza Hall, Panjim.

SHANTY TOWN



Homeless migrants have set up make-shift homes with tarp and pieces of cloth for shelter from the sun at the new Mapusa bus stand. Authorities have yet to visit the site and take action

Margao to get 18 new pay parking zones; Traffic cell identifies 350+ vehicle slots

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a bid to streamline vehicle parking and ease congestion in the city, the Margao Traffic Cell has identified 18 new locations for the implementation of a pay parking system for both cars and two-wheelers. The system aims to offer systematic and organised parking, optimising available space while ensuring the safety of vehicles.

According to the proposal, over 350 cars and numerous two-wheelers can be accommodated across these identified spots.

The plan also includes a pilot phase at key congested areas such as Margao Square near SBI, Fatima Convent, and Isidore Baptista Road. (see box)

Additional spots identified for pay parking include the stretch from the Old Collectorate building to Grace Church Corner (Khadi Gramodyog Shop), and parts of Mariana Gracias Road, Francisco Luis Gomes Road and Francisco Road.

- Around the MMC building on NH-66, with space reserved for MMC staff and official vehicles
- Open two-wheeler parking area near the Comunidade building, designated for private vehicles
- From Vaz Enterprises (opposite Lohia Maidan) to Gaylin Restaurant, with capacity for 30 cars and two-wheelers
- De Souza Chambers to Sadekar Building (via Kris Kross & Cartier Shop), accommodating 42 cars
- Bajaj Allianz to Blue Isidore Dart Office near Adarsh High School, with 11 car slots.
- Parkar Electric to Manish Electric near Old Hari Mandir, where 17 cars can be parked
- From Women's Look shop to Krishna Appliance near Old Bhatikar School, with space for 10 cars
- Lily Garments to Caro Corner (Martin Dias Road), including the Pick-up Stand, with capacity for 28 cars and two-wheelers
- Tourist Hotel to Virginkar Petrol Pump (Luis Miranda Road), where 15 vehicles can be accommodated
- SBI Margao to the corner of Fatima Convent Compound, allowing for 54 cars
- Saaj Hotel to Anugraha Restaurant, with 18 car slots
- Woodland Hotel to Gracias Hospital (Luis Miranda Road & Miguel de Loyola Furtado Road), accommodating 45 cars

The proposal, submitted to the Margao Municipal Council, is grounded in the objective of offering structured and secure parking solutions catering primarily to two-wheelers and light motor vehi-

cles. The Traffic Cell believes this initiative will improve traffic flow, reduce haphazard parking, and better utilise urban road space, especially in high-density zones.

Tanavade urges State support for rly flyover

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Rajya Sabha MP Sadanand Shet Tanavade has urged the Goa government to support the long-pending demand for a railway flyover at Davorlim to ease traffic congestion.

Tanavade, who inspected the site on Thursday along with Navelim MLA Ulhas Tuenkar, panchayat members, and Konkani Railway officials, said the level crossing—just after Margao Railway Station—remains shut for up to 25 minutes per cycle due to the passage of 20-30 trains daily. This, he said, severely affects students, workers, and daily commuters.

"This is a key link between Davorlim and areas like Aquem-Baixo, Quepem, and Cuncolim. A flyover is essential, especially with the upcoming educational hub here," he said.

Tanavade noted that land acquisition will be a challenge and urged the Chief Minister to visit the site. He also called for coordination between the state, Konkani Railway, and South Western Railways to expedite the project.

"For the safety and convenience of the people, this issue must be addressed without delay," he concluded.

Rs 24.26 crore in subsidies disbursed to 37,000 ryots in S Goa

Farmers urged to tap subsidies; organic and collective farming get a boost as government steps up support

Team Herald

MARGAO: At a time when farmers are demanding greater support from the government, the Agriculture Department has revealed that subsidies amounting to Rs 24.26 crore were distributed to 37,685 beneficiaries in South Goa during the financial year 2024-25.

The subsidies were disbursed under various state schemes aimed at boosting agricultural productivity, promoting mechanisation, and supporting sustainable farming.

District Agriculture Officer Rajesh Prabhudesai stated that the highest subsidy—Rs 1.97 crore—was released under the Support Price Scheme, which provides compensation for crops such as coconut, rice, and cashew. This scheme benefited 6,101 farmers.

The second-largest allocation of Rs 3.95 crore was disbursed under the Farm Mechanisation Scheme, supporting services related to tractors, rice harvesting, and milling machinery. This alone benefited 19,298 farmers.

Prabhudesai explained that the South Goa District Agriculture Office, operational since 2014, implements these schemes across talukas including Salcete, Quepem, Sanguem, Dharbandora, Canacona, Mormugao, and Ponda. Proposals are processed at the district level and funds are transferred directly to farmers via the divisional agriculture offices.

In line with the push for sus-

OTHER SCHEMES

■ **Mechanisation support for machinery purchase:** Rs 93.51 lakh to 663 farmers

■ **Irrigation and horticulture support:** Rs 2.02 crore to 1,092 farmers

■ **Farmers' support fund:** Rs 1.87 crore to 1,310 beneficiaries

■ **Certified seeds scheme:** Rs 51.47 lakh to 5,629 farmers

■ **Fence construction assistance:** Rs 35.50 lakh to 153 beneficiaries

tainable agriculture, the government also promoted organic and collective farming. During the year, Rs 65.77 lakh was disbursed to 799 farmers under the Organic Farming Scheme, and Rs 35.50 lakh was provided to six groups practising Collective Farming.

Prabhudesai encouraged more farmers to take advantage of the schemes, particularly to bring unused farmland back into cultivation. However, he acknowledged that some subsidy applications remain pending due to funding limitations.

Benaulim beach parking lot 'hub of nuisance and neglect', complain locals

Team Herald

MARGAO: A formal complaint has been lodged with the South Goa Superintendent of Police (SP), regarding the alarming state of the Benaulim public parking lot. Social worker Warren Alemao met with authorities to raise concerns about the facility becoming a hub for illegal activities during nighttime.

In his written complaint Alemao said, "Every night, this area transforms into a hot-spot for illegal activities, with drunken miscreants littering, drug peddlers operating freely, and absolute lawlessness prevailing." He emphasised that "the absence of police enforcement has made it a haven for criminal elements, putting

the safety of locals and tourists at risk."

Alemao informed the Superintendent that "despite multiple concerns raised by the community, no concrete action has been taken." He has specifically requested "immediate police patrolling and strict enforcement of the law" in the area. This complaint follows longstanding concerns from residents about the misuse of the government car park. Residents have complained that groups gather after dark, consuming alcohol and playing loud music.

Local residents have specifically called for CCTV surveillance and increased police presence, particularly concerned about "the safety of women, especially young female tourists".



In the wake of unpleasant incidents about taxi operators posted on social media by tourists visiting Goa, Herald Media asked people, if they believe all taxis should be brought under aggregator apps for ease of travel in the State?

IS THERE AN URGENT NEED FOR TAXI OPERATORS IN GOA TO JOIN AGGREGATOR APPS?

“ Before launching any app, we need to ask — how much will locals actually benefit? Who's going to use the app and call taxis to their doorstep? Earlier, taxi operators were forced to install meters — a meter worth Rs 4,000 was given to them for Rs 11,000. They're already struggling to get business at the airport because of the yellow-black and blue cabs. Fights are breaking out almost daily — in Vasco, in Mopa. Goa is a small state. Do we really need a taxi app? — Tara Kerkar, Social Activist

“ Some individuals, with the backing of elected representatives, have damaged this business for their own gain — mainly to build vote banks. It's time for Goan taxi operators to unite and urgently develop their own aggregator app. They've been misled by ministers and MLAs, who pushed them to invest in things like meters, only to leave them at a loss. But there's still time to salvage the industry — if they act now — Mariano Ferrao, Social Activist

“ Just the other day, the Chief Minister cautioned all taxi drivers — especially those involved in clashes or causing confusion with tourists — as it's definitely giving Goa tourism a bad name. The message going viral around the world is that tourists are being heckled, whether by rent-a-cab operators, Goa Miles, or local taxi drivers. It's total confusion. What are we heading for? A law and order situation compromised by anyone cannot be tolerated. All stakeholders need to sit together and put this issue to rest once and for all. They should come together and develop their own app — Trajano D'Mello, Political Commentator

“ I don't think this should be an open and shut answer. There is no 'yes' and 'no'. The government has time and again failed to take the people into confidence. They bring out schemes without creating awareness among the stakeholders. That is why objections and resentment is there. The government has to bring the Goan taxi operators across the table, explain to them properly and come to a solution which will benefit the Goan taxi operators. — Anthony D'Silva, Social Activist

YouTube

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