

Shack owners report mixed fortunes as tourism season winds down

Soaring costs and poor reviews from social media influencers take toll on shack business; South Goa operators say flights shifting to Mopa airport has also affected footfalls

KARSTEN MIRANDA
karsten@herald-go.com

MARGAO: As Goa's tourism season approaches its traditional end this month, shack owners across the coastal belt have expressed mixed views about business this year. Cruz Cardozo, president of the Goa Shack Owners Welfare Society (SOWS), described the season as "not too good, but not too bad" — somewhere between expectations.

Unlike previous years, they noted that licences were issued early this time, allowing them to open in time for the peak tourist period. "We were happy that this year, we got our licences early. This allowed us to set up our shacks in time," Cardozo said, adding that last year they had missed out on the Diwali tourist rush due to delayed licensing.

Cardozo suggested bringing all tourism stakeholders together on a single platform to address issues affecting the industry.

SOWS has already taken up several concerns, including the stray dog menace, lack of changing rooms, inadequate toilet facilities at beaches, poor illumination in some areas, and a new proposal for joint sewage collection and disposal through a common sewerage pipeline to be implemented by the authorities. While acknowledging action by the tourism department against touts and hawkers, Cardozo maintained that "more needs to be done in terms of infrastructure and amenities available to tourists," stressing that Goa must reclaim its status as a premier destination.

A key issue raised by shack owners is the burden of high overhead costs, which has forced some establishments to shut down, while others are struggling to stay afloat. Cardozo confirmed this



“Wherever there are loopholes, wherever there are problems, even when it comes to bureaucratic issues, let us sit across the table and resolve these issues so that we ourselves can bring about an improvement for the next season

— Cruz Cardozo, President, Shack Owners Welfare Society

“Whenever people talk about Goa being expensive, they are quick to target taxis, but that's not fair. It's all across the board—hotels, flights, restaurant food

— Tourism Stakeholder

trend but pointed out that many shacks had a good run for about two-and-a-half months, from December to late February. South Goa shack owners expressed particular concern about the shift of major airlines to Mopa airport, which has led to a drop in international flights arriving at Dabolim, affecting their footfall.

Another shack owner observed that foreign tourists typically leave by March, while domestic tourists continue to visit through April and May — as it also coincides with schools' summer holidays.

Some shack owners also raised concerns about negative social media campaigns and called for government action against influencers who they claim are deliberately damaging Goa's image. They said that this year Goa came under unusually sharp criticism on social media, which hurt business. They believe this was a targeted campaign rather than just organic

reviews. However, they added that Goa continues to enjoy a strong connection with repeat visitors, who can share the real story of why they return.

There is also growing recognition that tourists are increasingly opting for other destinations. A tourism stakeholder involved in tours and travel said Goa is becoming expensive and stressed that reasonable pricing is necessary to support the local workforce.

Industry voices also suggested promoting experiential tourism and cultural tours, especially in the rural hinterland, to offer visitors a deeper connection with Goan culture. Attractions beyond the beaches are gaining popularity and could help diversify the State's tourism appeal. Stakeholders also highlighted the need to attract tourists from new international markets, noting that the traditional markets have declined—largely due to global factors like the Russia-Ukraine war.

TTAG CHIEF FLAGS TOURIST ACCOMODATION GLUT, CALLS FOR COURSE CORRECTION

KARSTEN MIRANDA

MARGAO: Travel and Tourism Association of Goa (TTAG) President Jack Sukhija has described the outgoing tourism season as "steady," while cautioning that not all industry segments fared equally well. He pointed to a mismatch between rising tourist arrivals and an even faster expansion in accommodation supply, saying the middle segment has been particularly hard hit.

"Overall it has been a steady year. There have been pockets which have done well, others which have been steady, and some—especially in the middle segment—that have been hit badly," said Sukhija while responding to queries from Herald about the season. "There has been a steady increase in numbers, but the capacity increase has been much more. We need to find a way to slow down the growth in supply and at the same time ensure that local communities benefit."

Responding to the ongoing debate about whether Goa is losing ground to competing destinations, Sukhija called for balanced growth and better planning. He said structural issues need urgent attention to preserve the state's appeal.

Among his key recommendations is the introduction of technology in the transport sector to

bring about transparency in fare discovery and improve the tourist experience. Cleanliness is another area of concern: Sukhija said highways, approach roads, and access routes to tourist areas must be kept clean, and wayside littering should be tackled head-on.

He also advocated for a phased reduction and eventual ban on single-use plastics across the state. On improving Goa's core beach tourism experience, Sukhija listed several measures: cracking down on touting, enforcing limits on loud music from beach shacks, building proper sewerage and toilet infrastructure, and creating safe, designated swim zones for single women.

Sukhija also flagged unregulated development as a growing issue. He called for discouraging "squatting and ugly tin construction in the fields," which he said detracts from the natural landscape. Additionally, he urged the state to implement a transparent licensing process for weddings and other tourism-related events, which have emerged as a major part of Goa's hospitality economy.

Concluding his remarks, the TTAG chief underscored the need for firm action against touts who harass tourists—an issue that continues to mar Goa's reputation despite repeated complaints.

Cavelosim's Passos ward gets road for the first time since Liberation



Villagers and panchayat members inaugurate the road

Team Herald

MARGAO: A motorable road has been constructed in Passos ward, Cavelosim, for the first time since Goa's Liberation, bringing long-awaited relief to residents who have endured decades of hardship, particularly during the monsoon.

The road, measuring over 350 metres, was recently completed by the local panchayat. Cavelosim Sarpanch Dixon Vaz said the project had been a priority over the past two years. "This road was a must, and we worked hard to make it a reality. We dedicate this road to all the people who have suffered since Liberation," he said. Vaz credited the support

of the panchayat members and secretary in completing the work.

Residents said the lack of road access had caused serious difficulties over the years. Elderly resident Piedade Passanha, 85, recalled his experiences of walking through fields and water during his younger days. "During the monsoon, it was the worst. No doctor could visit, and children would only get dressed properly after reaching the other side," he said, expressing gratitude to the panchayat for finally completing the road.

The road is expected to ease movement and improve access to essential services for the residents of the ward.

CCTV surveillance planned at Sonsoddo to curb trash burning



Team Herald

MARGAO: In a bid to tackle the recurring problem of garbage burning at the Sonsoddo dump yard, plans are underway to install CCTV cameras at the site and surrounding areas.

Sources in the Margao Municipal Council (MMC) said that over five incidents of garbage fires have been reported in recent weeks, prompting officials to explore stricter surveillance measures.

At a recent meeting held at the South Goa Collectorate, it was decided to install 15 CCTV cameras across key locations in and around Sonsoddo. "The cameras will be strategically placed to monitor dump sites and nearby areas prone to unauthorised dumping and fire outbreaks," a source said.

An official who attended the meeting explained that many of the fires were triggered by highly flam-

mable dry waste. "These repeated incidents have raised serious concerns about waste management and public safety in the area. Though no injuries have been reported, the risk remains high," the official noted.

The decision to enhance surveillance comes in response to numerous complaints from residents about frequent garbage fires. Authorities hope that the cameras will act as both a deterrent and a monitoring tool.

"By recording video evidence, we'll be able to identify individuals involved in unauthorised dumping or deliberate burning. The footage will also help us coordinate waste transportation more efficiently," the official said. "If a private vendor is found dumping garbage illegally, a fine will be imposed. We'll also forward images of offenders to the police for further action."

P'yats Directorate orders demolition of illegal sheds in Navelim

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Directorate of Panchayats has ordered the demolition of an unauthorised structure built in the setback area of a property in Calvaddo, Navelim, following a prolonged legal battle initiated by local resident Anthony Britto.

In a judgment delivered by Florina Colaco e Fernandes, Additional Director of Panchayats-II (South), the appellants—Rosarinho M. Fernandes and his wife Fatima Fernandes—were found to have constructed two sheds in violation of the Goa Building Regulations, 2010. The structures, located on the eastern side of a building adjacent to Britto's property in Survey No. 68/8, were found to be illegal.

Britto first reported the matter on October 13, 2022, alleging that the sheds were erected without the necessary permissions. He claimed that despite directions from

the Directorate, the Village Panchayat of Navelim failed to act, forcing him to seek legal recourse.

The judgment noted that the structures were not temporary and that the appellants had failed to produce any evidence of approval or authorisation. A panchnama report and sketch prepared by the Village Panchayat on November 10, 2022, confirmed the violation of building norms.

"The appellant has constructed the suit structures in the setback area of the eastern side of the building, thereby violating the Building Regulations 2010," the order stated, directing that the illegal construction be removed.

The Directorate has instructed the Village Panchayat Secretary to ensure the demolition is carried out. If the appellants fail to do so voluntarily, the panchayat has been authorised to requisition a demolition squad.

100 years of Mario Miranda: Calls abound for grand tribute to icon

Team Herald

MARGAO: As the birth centenary year of India's iconic cartoonist and Padma Vibhushan awardee Mario Miranda begins, Madganvcho Awaaz has called on the government to mark the occasion with national-level tributes.

They are urging authorities to initiate official celebrations, exhibitions, educational programmes, and the construction of a commemorative monument to honour the legacy of the legendary Goan artist.

"Mario Miranda captured the essence of Indian life through his art and left an indelible mark on generations. As we enter his 100th birth anniversary year, it is only fitting that the government steps up and ensures his contributions are celebrated in a manner befitting his stature," Prabhav Naik of Madganvcho Awaaz stated.



Naik emphasised that commemorating Miranda's centenary is not just about remembering an individual, but about recognising a cultural legacy. He also highlighted that other eminent Goans, including Padma Bhushan award-winning painter Laxman Pai and acclaimed cinematographer K. Vaikunth, alias Vaikunth Kuncolienkar, are also en-

tering their birth centenary years and deserve similar recognition.

"Celebrating these milestones is an opportunity to reconnect young people with our cultural history. Many of these figures are not widely known to the newer generations, and public commemorations would help reintroduce their lives and contributions," Naik said.

He criticised the tendency of routine government events to consume large budgets without yielding lasting cultural value. Instead, he advocated for redirecting a portion of those funds to meaningful centenary celebrations that would enrich communities and promote intergenerational learning.

"These are not short-term events. Centenary commemorations have deep educational and cultural value. They promote unity, instil pride, and reinforce shared identity.

They also ensure that public spending contributes to long-term societal enrichment," he said.

Naik also called for the inclusion of public exhibitions, school programmes, documentaries, and dedicated monuments as part of the celebration plans. He stressed that preserving Goa's heritage involves more than safeguarding monuments—it also requires honouring the lives and stories of its people.

"The government has both a responsibility and an opportunity to keep alive the memory of Goans who have made significant contributions to our culture and identity. Let us not allow their stories to fade into oblivion," Naik urged.

He reiterated his earlier appeal to the government to initiate official commemorative events for all three Goan icons whose centenary years fall in 2024–25.

MAX. TEMP 35.2 °C
MIN. TEMP 28.2 °C
idharudhar



Relax, it's impossible to draw anything on these roads!

Now, electricity department to pull the plug on illegal kiosks, cables in Margao

Team Herald

MARGAO: After launching a similar drive in Panjim, the Electricity Department is now preparing to crack down on illegal encroachments and unauthorised installations—including overhead and underground cables—in Margao.

Executive Engineer Kashinath Shetye, who holds additional charge at the Margao division, confirmed that action will soon be taken against illegal gaddas set up along the footpath adjoining the department's property at Aquem.

"The stall owners have been informed and given a four-day deadline to vacate the area," Shetye said. "These gaddas are illegally occupy-



ing the footpath, which is a violation of the High Court order. They also obstruct emergency access to our premises, which is being readied for departmental parking."

He warned that if the stalls are not removed within the stipulated time, the department will proceed with demolition. Shetye also noted that several of the stalls are not operated

by local Goans.

Department officials stressed that such encroachments hinder operations, especially during emergencies when department vehicles must move in and out quickly. "Running businesses on public footpaths is illegal, and such violations will not be tolerated," he added.

However, some stall owners claimed they had not received any formal notice about the impending action.

In addition to removing illegal stalls, Shetye revealed that the department is also gearing up to take action against the unauthorised laying of internet cables in Margao. These include cables strung on electricity poles and those buried near

underground power lines.

"These cables have been installed without coordination or permission, posing safety hazards and damaging infrastructure," he said.

Legal proceedings are already underway, with court hearings scheduled for May 5 and 8. "Once the court issues its order, we will act. If companies fail to comply or pay penalties, we are empowered to attach their properties," Shetye warned.

The department said the enforcement drive aims to reclaim public space and safeguard its infrastructure. Officials believe the action will serve as a strong message to violators and help restore order around public and departmental property in Margao.