

REGULAR FEATURE? Yet another blaze sounds alarm bells in Taleigao

Fire erupted in a field opposite a residential complex on Wednesday, sending thick plumes of smoke into the air; fire dept personnel doused the flames

Team Herald

PANJIM: Two days after a fire broke out in a dry grass field at Camrabhat in Taleigao and raged for around six hours before being doused by fire personnel, a fresh blaze erupted on Wednesday in a field opposite the Models Legacy residential complex in the village, sending thick plumes of smoke into the air and alarming local residents.

The cause of the blaze is yet to be ascertained. The personnel from the Directorate of Fire and Emergency Services rushed to the spot and doused the flames.

Speaking to reporters, Agnelo Da Cunha, Taleigao panch member, said, "As per the traditional practice, farmers set fire to burn stubble in their fields. However, they should exercise caution while doing this. Comunidade should take action to prevent this because most of the land is barren. The fire is destroying the comunidade land."

"This has become a regular feature. It happens every year. However, everyone is working in tandem to control the fire," he said.

Shivamma, a local resident, said, "The moment I heard about the incident I rushed to my house as gas cylinders were stored. The fire incident occurred close



A fresh fire erupted in a field opposite the Models Legacy residential complex in Taleigao on Wednesday alarming local residents



A dead tree goes up in smoke near Sai Krupa hotel at Mercês

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—Agnelo Da Cunha, Taleigao panch member

“The moment I heard about the incident I rushed to my house as gas cylinders were stored. The fire incident occurred close to my house. The farmers who grow crops, set fire to the field. Initially it was in a corner of the field but slowly it spread to other parts. Here, there are around 20 small houses

— Shivamma, Taleigao resident

“The fire broke out in the field today yet again. However, it was noticed quickly and authorities arrived and the fire tender was contacted. This is happening on a regular basis. There has to be some solution. Problem was that fire brigades could not reach the spot as it was in the middle of the field which is huge

—Cecille Rodrigues, another resident

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ticed quickly and authorities arrived and the fire tender was contacted. This is happening on a regular basis. There has to be some solution to this problem. Problem was that fire brigades could not reach the spot as it was in the middle of the field."

It may be recalled that on

May 5, a fire that broke out in a dry grass field at Camrabhat in Taleigao caused panic in the surrounding residential areas and forced some residents to evacuate from their apartments.

The blaze began around 11:30 am and sent thick plumes of smoke into nearby homes and flats. Though

fire tenders from Panjim HQ, Pilerne and Porvorim Fire Stations were deployed to the scene, the lack of accessible roads to the field made it difficult for emergency personnel to fully control the flames.

Meanwhile, in yet another incident, a dry tree caught fire early Wednesday morning near Sai Krupa Hotel in Mercês, prompting a quick response from the Panjim Fire and Emergency Services. Firefighters successfully doused the flames before they could spread further.

According to Govind Gawas, leading fire fighter, "We received a call in the morning about the fire incident. We rushed to the spot and found a car that had been damaged. There was no information as to who set the field on fire. We told the locals to maintain a vigil."

Open Letter to MLA Jennifer Monserrate: Taleigao is burning

Dear Smt. Jennifer Monserrate,

I write to you as a concerned citizen and opposition leader from Taleigao – with anger, sorrow, and a deep sense of betrayal. On May 5, 2025, our beloved Taleigao literally burned. A raging fire tore through the fields in Camrabhat-Tonca, engulfing homes in thick smoke and forcing the evacuation of 30 residents, including infants and a 95-year-old woman. For over five hours, flames devoured what was left of our village's green fields. Reptiles like snakes and tortoises were found charred in the ashes – innocent wildlife burnt alive – and perhaps countless birds and insects perished too, as towering plumes of toxic smoke billowed into the sky. Families fled their apartments in panic, covering their mouths from the fumes, praying the fire wouldn't reach their doorsteps. It was a scene of horror and devastation, "horrific" as one eyewitness put it. And yet, amid this chaos and fear, you were nowhere to be seen. Not a word of reassurance, not a gesture of leadership. Nothing. Your silence was as suffocating as the smoke that hung over Taleigao that day.

This inferno was not an isolated incident – far from it. It has become painfully clear that these disasters are part of a pattern, a "recurring environmental hazard" and a "shameful routine" in Taleigao. Last summer, around May 2024, a similar fire broke out in our fields, and before that, in February 2023, another major blaze erupted. In fact, residents say such fires erupt almost every summer in May, year after year. Our fields – once the pride of Taleigao – have turned into tinderboxes, igniting regularly and endangering everyone around. Each time, we hear excuses or mumbled guesses about the cause ("crop stubble burning" or "somebody lit dry grass and left"), but we never see a lasting solution or anyone held accountable. The question that screams for an answer is: Who is behind these fires, and why are they allowed to continue with impunity? Are these "accidents" or deliberate acts of negligence (or worse, sabotage to clear land)? We don't know – because no thorough investigation ever seems to happen, no one is identified or punished for this annual environmental vandalism. And you, our MLA, have never demanded answers publicly. Your inaction and apathy have effectively given a free pass to whoever is setting Taleigao ablaze.

Equally damning is the failure of local authorities under your influence. Activists have lambasted the Taleigao

panchayat for ignoring repeated pleas to prevent these fires. For months before this tragedy, residents begged the Panchayat to provide a tractor or equipment to clear dry crop stubble after harvest instead of letting farmers resort to burning. "Farmers are willing to pay for the fuel if a tractor is arranged – yet nothing was done," local activist Cecille Rodrigues reported in frustration. The Agriculture Department even issued a written circular last November warning against open stubble burning, citing the serious risks to air quality and soil health, and urging alternatives. All these warnings were ignored. Not a single official took proactive steps to avoid the inferno that everyone saw coming. And when the fire did erupt, not a single member of the village panchayat even came to the site to help. This is the frightening truth: when Taleigao was choking and burning, our local government was absent.

Madam Monserrate, where were you when Taleigao burned? As the elected representative of this constituency, it was your duty to be at the forefront – coordinating emergency response, comforting your people, demanding accountability for the disaster. Instead, we saw nothing of you – no presence, no leadership, not even a statement of concern. The day after the fire, newspapers carried quotes from fire officials, eyewitnesses, activists... but not from our MLA. You, who should have been the loudest voice of all, remained inexplicably silent. This silence is not just a minor lapse – it is an abdication of responsibility. Even the media noted the "disturbing trend" that authorities have turned a blind eye while the green lungs of Taleigao go up in flames. This latest blaze was a "wake-up call" – but it seems you hit the snooze button and went back to sleep.

Madam Monserrate, your track record in crisis after crisis has been consistent – consistently dismal. You fail to act, fail to speak, and fail to care when it matters most. When leadership and empathy are needed, you vanish. But leadership isn't about cutting ribbons at ceremonies or posting congratulatory messages on Facebook. It's about showing up when your people are suffering and doing everything in your power to help. It's about being accountable. On these counts, you have utterly failed Taleigao.

Francis Coelho
(Concerned Citizen and Opposition Leader, Taleigao)

HC to deliver verdict on LED fishing today

PANJIM: The High Court of Bombay at Goa will deliver its judgment on LED fishing in the State's marine waters on Thursday, May 8.

The Court had reserved its verdict in the matter in September last year.

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Pet dog owners in Mapusa will soon need to pay registration tax

Directed to register canines with municipality; Rs 500 to be charged as one-time registration fee

Team Herald

MAPUSA: Mapusa Municipal Council has announced the introduction of a new tax on dog owners, requiring all residents with domestic dogs to register their pets with the municipality.

As part of the new regulation, a one-time registration fee of Rs 500 will be charged for each dog, with an annual renewal fee of Rs 100. Upon successful registration, every dog will be issued a unique identification tag, which must be worn at all times.

Municipal officials explained that the initiative aims to promote responsible pet ownership, improve monitoring of domestic animals, and enhance the tracking of lost or stray pets. The measure is also expected to help address the growing number of unregistered dogs in urban areas.

The council plans to im-

plement the registration process in phases and will release official guidelines soon. Pet owners have been urged to comply with the new rule to avoid penalties in the future.

Meanwhile, Mapusa councillor Adv Shanshank Narvekar, who along with five others opposed the resolution to impose tax on pet dog owners stating that the municipality had no expertise. He cautioned that low-income group people will not come forward to register their dogs as they mostly have mongrel breeds.

Adv Narvekar said that the municipality had also not worked out the cost of the metal tag and the number of personnel required to carry out the exercise of registering the domestic dogs.

In 2023-24, the Mapusa Municipal Council had decided to impose tax on pet dog owners in a bid to mobilise revenue. But it was not implemented.

PIL seeks urgent action on traffic safety at Porvorim

Team Herald

PANJIM: Adv Moses Pinto, who has filed a public interest litigation (PIL) writ petition regarding the elevated corridor at Porvorim, on Wednesday submitted additional suggestions, including the immediate restoration and maintenance of traffic lights by the PWD and Goa Traffic Police Cell.

The suggestions were submitted to assist the High Court of Bombay at Goa in identifying a practicable and safe resolution to the grievances raised during the construction of the six-lane elevated corridor at Porvorim.

Adv Pinto has also sought

the installation of continuous barricading with high-visibility tape and warning signs, as well as the construction of temporary monsoon drains before the onset of the monsoon, with grating covers.

He has stated that traffic signal lights at various road junctions were non-functional and lacked operational control, thereby creating traffic snarls and endangering road safety. He has suggested the immediate restoration and maintenance of traffic lights by the PWD and Traffic Police Cell.

Adv Pinto has pointed out that live electrical cables were protruding dan-

gerously from roadside generators and exposed wires near pedestrian and vehicle pathways were posing electrocution hazards. He has suggested ensuring full insulation, supervised rewiring with barricading, and reinforcing overhead safety wires, along with the installation of warning signage immediately.

He has highlighted inconsistent barricading, with missing reflectors and unmanaged traffic lanes, which were endangering both motorists and pedestrians and suggested the installation of continuous barricading with high-visibility tape and warning signs.

Panjim roads near finish line, claims Smart City body

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Ltd (IPSCDL) on Wednesday stated that it had completed bituminous concrete surfacing of 6,850 metres under the Smart City road project, 'without major road closures' and ensuring minimal disruption to the public.

Concrete roadwork on St

Inez Road is nearing completion, and sewerage connections from Taad Maad to the Sewage Treatment Plant (STP), Tonca, are in place, it added. Road painting and road signage installation will be completed by 31 May, followed by landscaping and tree plantation in June with a focus on climate.

Additionally, three roads near Café Bhonsle Square

have been completed and reopened for traffic, it said.

The public, particularly the residents of Panjim, have faced hardships due to the digging of roads, which has caused traffic congestion and dust pollution. Some citizens approached the High Court of Bombay at Goa, seeking directions to the IPSCDL to take measures to alleviate their hardships

Crime Branch nets second key accused in global sex trafficking case

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Crime Branch of Goa Police achieved a major breakthrough in the international human trafficking case involving foreign women, with the arrest of a second key accused from Bengaluru, Karnataka.

The accused, identified as Zohar Ahmed Khalidi, was apprehended on May 7, in a coordinated operation by the Crime Branch. Authorities confirmed that he will be brought to Goa shortly for further investigation. He hails from Karnataka.

The transactions of the UPI IDs and QR code by clients of the victims were done through Kalidi's accounts, say police and added the bank details of the amount credited in his account

will be available tomorrow.

Earlier, the prime accused in the case, Nancy King'Orl alias Aline, a Kenyan national, had been arrested. Investigation revealed that she was the main handler in the international trafficking racket.

The case came to light on March 3 this year, after a Kenyan woman filed a complaint with the Crime Branch, alleging that she had been lured to India by Nancy under the pretext of a hotel job. Upon arrival in Goa, her passport was confiscated and she was allegedly forced into prostitution.

During the investigation, police found that Nancy had provided the victim with a UPI scanner to collect payments from customers. The linked

bank account was found to be registered in Zohar Ahmed Khalidi's name.

Following this lead, a special team from the Crime Branch comprising of PI Prashal Dessai, PSI Manesh Dabhale and police constables Viraj, Narvenkar and Minika Kodalkar travelled to Karnataka and conducted a search operation, resulting in Zohar's arrest. He is suspected to be a part of the inter-state human trafficking network.

The investigation is being led by Police Inspector Prashal P N Desai, under the supervision of DySP Rajesh Kumar and Superintendent of Police Rahul Gupta (IPS).

Police have launched a manhunt for other members of the trafficking ring and further developments are expected soon.

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