

GCZMA proposes 3 yr-permits for beach weddings, slashes construction fees

The one-time permit for three years will cost organisers Rs 7 lakh, and be valid for 40 weddings

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a move aimed at streamlining permissions for beachside events, the Goa Coastal Zone Management Authority (GCZMA) has proposed a new framework that would allow event organisers to obtain a three-year permit to hold up to 40 beach weddings or similar functions on a designated stretch by paying a lump sum fee of Rs 7 lakh.

This would be the first time such a long-term permission is offered, replacing the current system where organisers must seek clearance for each individual event. The GCZMA had last year increased the application fee to Rs 1 lakh for a single event spanning five days.

Under the proposed changes, organisers applying at least a week in advance could be charged Rs 50,000 for a five-day event. For applications submitted between three and seven days before the event, the proposed fee is Rs 60,000. Those applying just three days in advance would need to pay Rs 75,000 — a reduction from the current Rs 1 lakh charge

The new proposal, now under active discussion, could benefit event managers who regularly use specific coastal stretches for weddings and

other functions.

A few years ago, industry stakeholders had suggested the need for a streamlined permission system, particularly for beach locations frequently used for destination weddings. Some stretches see high demand throughout the season, prompting calls for a single approval mechanism instead of multiple clearances. While the proposal could reduce administrative hurdles, it is unclear how the blanket permit system might affect public access to beaches where events are scheduled.

In addition to the long-term wedding permit, the GCZMA has suggested revisions to existing short-term permission categories. Under the proposed changes,



organisers applying at least a week in advance could be charged Rs 50,000 for a five-day event. For applications submitted between three and seven days before the event, the proposed fee is Rs 60,000. Those applying just three days in advance would need to pay Rs 75,000 — a reduction from the current Rs 1 lakh charge.

The authority has also recommended changes to fees for coastal construction

MA has suggested introducing a fee for storage and sale infrastructure for petroleum products in the coastal zone, fixed at Rs 500 per square metre of built-up land.

Permissions for constructing flood protection walls and culverts, which previously had no fixed fees, will now be charged Rs 50,000 for government projects and Rs 1 lakh for private developments such as hotels or resorts. Further, applications for gazebos, watchtowers, decks, and security cabins along the coast will now attract a charge of Rs 350 per square metre. However, no charges will be levied for permissions related to coastal access roads, pavements, or internal roads, the GCZMA has clarified.

Notably, the proposed rate for building new hotels is Rs 500 per square metre of built-up space, a significant drop from the earlier Rs 1,250 per square metre.

Proposed fee reductions include a drop from Rs 700 to Rs 100 per square metre for new swimming pools, and from Rs 400 to Rs 200 per square metre for constructing new casino vessels. For the first time, the GCZ-

Reforms welcome, but costs and confusion remain, say planners

KARSTEN MIRANDA

MARGAO: The Goa Coastal Zone Management Authority's proposal for three-year beach wedding permits has divided industry stakeholders — tourism officials are cautiously optimistic while event planners express concern.

"Prima facie we welcome the decision of the Government to issue licences for three years. It is a significant step in ease of doing business," says Jack Sukhija, President of the Travel and Tourism Industry Association (TTAG). However, he adds that "the fees may be needed to be looked at for the services offered by GCZMA."

Despite this official welcome, wedding planners who work directly with clients tell a different story. Shruti Tiwari, Founder of VLW Global, highlights the ongoing challenges despite promotional efforts.

"On one hand, we are passionately promoting Goa as a premier destination for weddings through platforms like the Wedding Summit and Wed in India. With exceptional connectivity to major international cities and a rich cultural backdrop, Goa should be thriving as the undisputed choice for destination weddings," she says.

"Yet, despite these advantages, we are seeing a steady decline in interest—primarily due to unclear and skyrocketing license costs. There is no clarity on the cost structure for permissions, and worse, the charges keep fluctuating unpredictably. Hotels quote one figure, and planners are left to face the music when surprise costs emerge," Tiwari explains.

According to event planners, couples planning beach weddings currently navigate a complex system requiring multiple permissions, with costs that many find prohibitive. Beach licenses cost approximately Rs 1.40 lakhs

and must be applied for 30 days in advance, with additional panchayat and sound permissions adding another Rs 50,000. They report that the new rules might seem like progress on paper but may not address fundamental issues.

For the upcoming season, Tiwari reveals she has "already lost three weddings to destinations like Sri Lanka and Oman, despite offering reduced planning fees."

Qammar Hakim, CEO of DRQ Events & Experiences, shares similar concerns about the proposed changes.

"The rising costs and complicated procedures for wedding licenses in Goa are pushing couples and planners away from the state. With fees as high as Rs 1.5 to Rs 1.8 lakh per beach function per day, the financial burden is only part of the problem. Permissions involve multiple government bodies, and the guidelines keep shifting, creating confusion and room for red tape—and, unfortunately, corruption, especially during last-minute approvals," he explains.

The confusion extends to couples planning their weddings as well. One couple recently sought advice online, writing: "We are getting married near the beach (not on the beach) and our wedding planner is asking a lot of money for CRZ lawn license, sound NOCs & fireworks licenses. I don't know why we are being made to pay the CRZ license, because the venue should technically get it to legally host an event."

"It often feels like the system is designed to be complicated, benefitting intermediaries more than the industry," Hakim concludes. "As a result, wedding planners across India are increasingly nudging clients toward destinations that are more transparent, consistent, and planner-friendly."

Save Old Goa panel urges ASI to demolish Exposition Secretariat, relocate police station

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Save Old Goa Action Committee on Saturday stated that it will write to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Goa Circle, urging the relocation of the Old Goa police station from the Exposition Secretariat and the dismantling of the concrete structures built at the site.

Committee coordinator Peter Viagas said that he was unable to write to the ASI earlier, as he was out of station, to demand the demolition of the Exposition Secretariat, which was constructed within the prohibited area ahead of the exposition of the relics of St Francis Xavier. "Now that the ASI has written to the Goa Archbishop asking for the removal of structures built within the protected area near the Basilica of Bom Jesus, we too will write to the ASI demanding that the Exposition Sec-

retariat be razed," he said.

John Mascarenhas from Ponda demanded that all 51 structures constructed ahead of the decennial exposition be demolished. "As per ASI conditions, these structures were supposed to be temporary and had to be dismantled within 10 days of the conclusion of the 45-day exposition. The authorities were instructed to use eco-sensitive materials, but permanent concrete structures were built instead. The Exposition Secretariat constructed opposite the Church of St Francis Assisi must be demolished. The ASI has full powers to act in protected areas," he added.

The Old Goa Police Station was shifted to the Exposition Secretariat on April 26, drawing criticism from parishioners and activists who have been demanding that the structure be razed and the police station relocated.

Traditional fishermen demand boat parking, fish drying facilities in Benaullim

Team Herald

We need proper public toilets, upgraded parking, better lighting, and a larger designated area for fish drying. Most importantly, we require a permanent space to secure our canoes and boats during the monsoon

—Antonio Fernandes, local shack owner

MARGAO: The traditional fishermen of Benaullim are urging the State government to resolve persistent issues, including the lack of designated spaces for drying fish and safe boat parking during the monsoon. The community, which has depended on fishing for generations, warns that the absence of basic infrastructure is jeopardising their livelihood.

Local fisherman Pele Fernandes expressed frustration over the government's delayed response. "Fishermen in Colva have been allotted land for drying fish. Why are we being ignored? Many women in our community rely on the fish drying trade, yet they have no proper space to work," he told reporters.

Fernandes revealed that the

community had previously met with the Chief Minister, who agreed to let them park their boats in an area owned by the fisheries department. However, he alleged that the Fisheries Minister later reversed the decision, proposing to auction the land instead. "We will not allow the government to allocate this land to others without addressing our needs first. We demand fair treatment," Fernandes asserted.

Echoing the call for better facilities, Antonio Fernandes, a local shack owner, stressed the

need for improved infrastructure to support both fishing and tourism in Benaullim. "We need proper public toilets, upgraded parking, better lighting, and a larger designated area for fish drying," he said. "Most importantly, we require a permanent space to secure our canoes and boats during the monsoon."

Fishermen and small-scale local tourism stakeholders from Benaullim constituency have warned that they will intensify their protests if the government fails to act promptly.

Water, wildlife & warning signs: Forest-born researcher fights for Mhadei

Team Herald

MARGAO: In the quiet forested village of Maloli, in Goa's northern Sattari taluka, 28-year-old Sandhya Mahadev Gaonkar grew up with nature as her closest neighbour. "I was born and raised in the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary," she says. "I've seen first-hand how people live alongside wildlife—not in conflict, but in harmony."

This rare relationship with nature drew her to the Goa Water Stories project, where her research explored the deep interconnections between the Mhadei River, the sanctuary's biodiversity, and the villagers who depend on both for survival.

A master's degree holder in Konkani, Sandhya viewed the project not as a mere academic exercise but as a homecoming. "Our communities have always depended on nature—not exploited it," she explains. "Whether it's farming, fishing or gathering resources, we've learned to adapt without disturbing the forest or the animals that live in it."

Her research was supported by environmental scholars Dr. Prakash and Dr. Sulochana Pednekar, as



well as mentor Wency, all of whom helped her navigate the complexities of water conservation within protected areas. With their guidance, Sandhya deepened her understanding of how water sustains life—not just for people, but for entire ecosystems.

"The Mhadei River is the lifeline of this sanctuary," she says. "It nourishes the plants and trees, supports a huge variety of birds and animals, and provides clean water to the people living nearby. Without it, none of us could survive here."

But even as she studied the sanctuary's beauty, Sandhya became increasingly aware of its fragility. Overextraction, deforesta-

tion, and unregulated tourism have begun to threaten this carefully balanced system. "We cannot take these rivers and forests for granted. Every drop of water in the Mhadei is part of a much bigger picture," she says.

One of the most impactful moments of her research was simply walking the familiar forest trails with fresh eyes. "This project changed how I see water. It's not just a resource—it's a lifeline for every living thing here. When we manage water carelessly, we're not just wasting it; we're endangering entire species."

Through her work, Sandhya hopes to raise awareness about the need for responsible water use and habitat protection. "People need to understand how interconnected everything is. You can't damage one part of the ecosystem and expect the rest to stay the same."

Her dream is for a Goa where environmental protection and human well-being go

The village communities were always the guardians of the forest, as we maintained, planted and lived in a symbiotic relationship of respect and co-dependence with our surroundings. The impression generated and proliferated by the media is that the communities in the forest area are the cause of wildlife extinction. Yet it is the propagation of modern developmental projects in these ecologically sensitive areas, our constant dislocation and displacement, the privatisation of forests and the influx of luxury resorts and guest houses with the exoticising of our local produce for the tourist that has led to the extinction of endemic species within our traditional village spaces

—Sandhya Gaonkar

hand in hand. "I want a future where development is sustainable, tourism is eco-friendly, and the rivers and forests are preserved for generations to come," she says.

For her, conservation is not a choice—it's an obligation. "I didn't read about these forests in a textbook. I grew up in them. This is my home, and protecting it is personal." In a state that increasingly sees its natural bounty commodified, Sandhya's voice stands as a reminder: that real knowledge begins with lived experience, and real change begins with care.

Goa Water Stories is a collaboration with the Living Waters Museum, the Centre for Public Policy and Governance at the Goa Institute of Management, the Goa University and the Sunaparanta Goa Centre for the Arts

Archdiocese announces new Clergy appointments and transfers

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Archdiocese of Goa and Daman has released the first set of priest appointments and transfers, with more to be finalised and announced in due course.

Appointed Parish Priests: Rev. Fr. Mario Vaz (O. L. of Livramento, Arlem); Rev. Fr. Lauzerio Godinho (O. L. of Assumption, Velsão); Rev. Fr. Miguel Pereira (O. L. of the Sick, Quelossim); Rev. Fr. George Aguiar (O. L. of the Rosary, Siridão); Rev. Fr. Agnelo Rodrigues (Mother of God, Pomburpa); Rev. Fr. Simpliciano Fernandes (St. Sebastian, Aquem); Rev. Fr. Polly Lobo (O. L. of Mercês, Colva); Rev. Fr. Mariano Silveira (St. Alex, Calangute); Rev. Fr. Francisco Xavier Fernandes (St. Christopher, Tivim); Rev. Fr. Cipriano da Silva (O. L. of Immaculate Conception, Panjim); Rev. Fr. Caetano Fernandes (St. Michael, Taleigão); Rev. Fr. Adolfo Alvares (Holy Family, Alto-Porvorim); Rev. Fr. Edmundo Barreto (St. Agnes, Santa Inês); Rev. Fr. Aleixo Menezes (O. L. of Health, Cuncolim); Rev. Fr. Xavier Estibeiro (St. John the Baptist, Benaullim); Rev. Fr. Mario Costa (O. L. of the Rosary, Fatorda); Rev. Fr. Savio Viagas (St. John the Baptist, Carambolim); Rev. Fr. Rosario Oliveira jr. (St. Mathew, Azossim); Rev. Fr. Manuelio Rodrigues (St. Stephen, Santo Estêvão); Rev. Fr. Vicente Leitão (St. Lawrence Martyr, Agassaim); Rev. Fr. Orlando Marques (St. Clare, Assonora); Rev. Fr. Benjamin Victoria (Holy Magi, Reis Magos); Rev. Fr. Maurice Collago (O. L. of the Rosary, Curca); Rev. Fr. Edson Fernandes (St. Cajetan, Assagão); Rev. Fr. Simon D'Cunha (O. L. of Succour and Good Success, Nagoa de Verna); Rev. Fr. Eremito Rebello (O. L. of Candelaria, Camorlim de



Salcete); Rev. Fr. Valeriano Andrade (St. Jacinto, São Jacinto); Rev. Fr. Benny D'Costa (St. Anne, Bodiem); Rev. Fr. Roque da Costa (O. L. of the Immaculate Conception, Betul).

Appointed Parochial Administrators: Rev. Fr. Victor Sequeira (St. Anne, Olaulim); Rev. Fr. Natalino Fernandes (St. Blaise, São Bras).

Appointed Chaplains: Rev. Fr. Walter de Sá (O. L. of Candelária, Porvorim-Socorro); Rev. Fr. Dylon D'Costa (St. Joaquim, Borda-Margão); Rev. Fr. Elvis Dias (St. Francis Xavier, Guirdolim-Chandor); Rev. Fr. Dylrel Dias (O. L. of the Rosary, Carvota-Loutulim); Rev. Fr. Constancio Carvalho (O. L. of Piety, Cobravaddo-Calangute); Rev. Fr. João Santana Colaço (St. Sebastian, Mazilvaddo-Benaullim); Rev. Fr. Seby Basilio Vaz (St. Sebastian, Fontainhas-Panjim); Rev. Fr. Richard Rodrigues (O. L. of Perpetual Succour, Kurpavaddo-Cortalim).

Appointed Assistants to the Parish Priest: Rev. Fr. Jovier Barreto (O. L. of Hope, Chinchim); Rev. Fr. Christopher Fernandes (O. L. of Health, Sancoale); Rev. Fr. Selwino Pereira (O. L. of Grace, Bicholim); Rev. Fr. Rony Fernandes (St. Andrew, Vasco da Gama); Rev. Fr. Arly Movin Menez-

es (O. L. of Grace, Margão); Rev. Fr. Stefan Rebello (O. L. of Grace, Margão); Rev. Fr. Clarence Carneiro (Holy Cross, Santa Cruz); Rev. Fr. Josley Rocha (Immaculate Conception, Paroda); Rev. Fr. Mario Noronha (Holy Cross, Quepem); Rev. Fr. Roblan Mascarenhas (O. L. of the Rosary, Navelim); Rev. Fr. Denrish D'Costa (O. L. of Mother of the Poor, Tilamola); Rev. Fr. Peter Judas Fernandes (Holy Spirit, Margão); Rev. Fr. John Albano Fernandes (Holy Cross, Verna); Rev. Fr. Socorro Rebello (St. Michael, Taleigão); Rev. Fr. Peter D'Souza (O. L. of Snow, Raia); Rev. Fr. Haston Fernandes (O. L. of the Immaculate Conception, Panjim); Rev. Fr. Lourenço Dias (St. Thomas, Cansaulim); Rev. Fr. Benny Fernandes (St. Anne, Parra); Rev. Fr. Valfern Barbosa (St. Joseph, Usgão); Rev. Fr. Sheldon D'Souza (O. L. of the Rosary, Fatorda); Rev. Fr. Jason Travasso (O. L. of Gloria, Varca); Rev. Fr. Slater Alemão (St. Joseph, São José de Areal); Rev. Fr. Frazer Vaz (O. L. of Socorro, Carmona); Rev. Fr. Jason Fernandes (St. Catherine of Alexandria, Old Goa); Rev. Fr. Malcom Colaço (St. John the Baptist, Benaullim).

Appointed Priests-on-the-Staff: Rev. Fr. Joseph Rowland Salema (St. Lawrence Martyr, Agassaim); Rev. Fr. Jose Dias (Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Nuvem); Rev. Fr. Saude Pereira (O. L. of Snow, Raia); Rev. Fr. Francisco Xavier Pereira (St. Francis Xavier, Chicalim); Rev. Fr. Sertório Rodrigues (St. Alex, Curtorim); Rev. Fr. Visitação Monteiro (O. L. of Help, Ribandar); Rev. Fr. Lino de Sá (O. L. of Grace, Margão); Rev. Fr. Johnsie Pereira (St. Alex, Calangute); Rev. Fr. Ventura Lourenço (Holy Spirit, Margão); Rev. Fr. Anil Kumar (St. Sebastian, Aquem).

Other appointments: Rev. Fr. Francisco Pires (Procuretor, Minor Seminary of O. L. of Salgão-Pilerne); Rev. Fr. Dylrel Dias (Managing Director, Blessed Joseph Vaz Enterprises, Verna); Rev. Fr. Jeronimo Fernandes (assisting at the Chapel of O. L. of Fatima, Bironde, Valpoi); Rev. Fr. Mariano Dias (to reside at Holy Cross Church, Santa Cruz); Rev. Fr. Filipe Neri Dias (ministry at Fulancho Khuris, Bambolim); Rev. Fr. Asterio Castellino (ministry at Fulancho Khuris, Bambolim); Rev. Fr. Jackie Albuquerque (to assist the Financial Administrator, Archbishop's House).

Priests relieved of their present posts: Rev. Fr. Carlos Mendes, Rev. Fr. Emidio Pinto, Rev. Fr. Bernardo Cota, Rev. Fr. Francisco Miranda.

■ Established on May 18, 1999, the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the Sattari taluka and covers 208.48 sq km

■ Named after the Mhadei River, a vital water source for both the local ecosystem and inhabitants, the sanctuary was created to safeguard its diverse flora and fauna, including ancient trees and unique species

■ The Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary is surrounded by five panchayats and 35 villages

■ Several environmental problems have arisen as a result of increased human activity and restrictions.



■ During monsoons the numerous waterfalls attract tourists and as a result, there are garbage issues faced due to pollution caused by plastic bags, beer cans and liquor and water bottles

■ The increase in (wildlife) tourism has led to various environmental problems, including noise pollution, water contamination, and soil erosion



Scan the QR code to experience Sandhya Gaonkar's 'Socio-Cultural and Environmental Challenges in the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary'