

Tension in Chinchinim as highway expansion survey commences

Officials question project's alignment; VP bats for an alternate bypass; civic officials say they have been kept in dark

Team Herald

MARGAO: Tensions are escalating in Chinchinim as highway authorities begin a controversial survey for National Highway 66 expansion, with local officials questioning the project's alignment.

Chinchinim Sarpanch Frank Viegas revealed that tree markings have been put on 750 trees across the stretch from Bellem junction in Navelim to Uskuni-Cuncolim, which includes markings in Chinchinim village, raising serious concerns among local residents.

"We have discovered tree markings for the highway route, and this comes as a shock given the previous assurances we received," Viegas stated. He pointed out that the Chief Minister had previously met panchayat members, local representatives and media at St Sebastian junction, promising to consider an alternate bypass instead of the current alignment.

Viegas found out that even



the Velim MLA is in the dark over this move, adding to the community's confusion and frustration. "We have been in correspondence with both state and central government authorities, hoping that better sense will prevail before any tree-cutting begins," he explained.

The local panchayat has been actively challenging the proposed highway route, citing concerns about community displacement and preservation of the area's socio-cultural fabric. Historical records show that the Chinchinim-Deusua Panchayat had previ-

"We have discovered tree markings for the highway route, and this comes as a shock given the previous assurances we received," Frank Viegas, - Chinchinim Sarpanch

ously passed resolutions in 2008 and 2009 supporting alternate bypass routes to minimize local impact.

The locals are demanding that the PWD and National Highway authorities

build a road bypass instead of a flyover on the NH66 stretch at Dandeavaddo. In previous meetings with the Chief Minister and Velim MLA Cruz Silva, the delegation led by Sarpanch Frank Viegas explained how a bypass would more effectively address traffic congestion compared to a flyover. They have consistently argued that an alternate bypass route would better serve the purpose of highway decongestion and minimize local displacement.

South Goa MP Captain Viriato Fernandes was also approached by the panchayat who has expressed support for the community's concerns about the NH 66 expansion through Chinchinim village.

As tree markings continue and survey work progresses, the community remains vigilant. "We are determined to protect our village and ensure that our voices are heard," Viegas emphasized, reflecting the continued resistance to the current highway expansion plan.

Margao council told to clear encroachments at Power House

Team Herald

MARGAO: Acting on a complaint filed by the Executive Engineer of the Power Department, the South Goa District Collector has issued a directive to the Margao Municipal Council (MMC) to initiate immediate action for the removal of encroachments and unauthorised constructions within the premises of the electricity department at Power House, Aquem-Margao.

The order comes in response to the presence of multiple stalls and gaddas operating on the footpath and in close proximity to the Power Department's property.

These encroachments, officials say, pose a serious threat to public safety and disrupt both emergency access and traffic movement.

District Magistrate Egna Cleetus, IAS, stated in the order that several violations were observed during inspections, including unauthorised occupation of public footpaths, encroachment on electricity department land, obstruction of emergency routes, illegal parking, and non-compliance with court orders regarding the removal of illegal structures.

The encroachments are also in violation of the Goa Land (Prohibition on Construction) Act, 199.

Cutbona's fishing season at fag end with hopes for better days ahead

200-odd vessels looking for last few catches of the year; cholera had dampened business

Team Herald

MARGAO: As Goa's annual fishing ban approaches on June 1, activity at Cutbona jetty reflects the seasonal rhythm of an industry in transition. Most of the 200-odd fishing vessels are making their final trips, with crews hustling to secure one last productive haul before the monsoon-enforced hiatus. Workers load ice and supplies onto departing trawlers while others dismantle nets from boats that have already concluded operations.

This season proved challenging for many operators. "The catch was inconsistent," shared one boat owner. "We struggled early on with poor mackerel yields, though things improved somewhat later in the season," he said.

The migrant workforce—primarily from Odisha and Jharkhand—now prepares to return home, some via trains while others board buses arranged by vessel owners.

Last year's cholera outbreak at the jetty had initially dampened business activity. The August-September health crisis, which claimed several lives, finally spurred action on long-delayed sani-



FILE PHOTO

Labourers engaged in fishing operations at Cutbona jetty

tation projects. The 50-seater toilet block, first proposed 15 years ago, is nearing completion after the government fast-tracked construction. Sulabh International officials confirm the facility should be operational before the monsoon, offering much-needed relief for the jetty's 4,500 migrant workers.

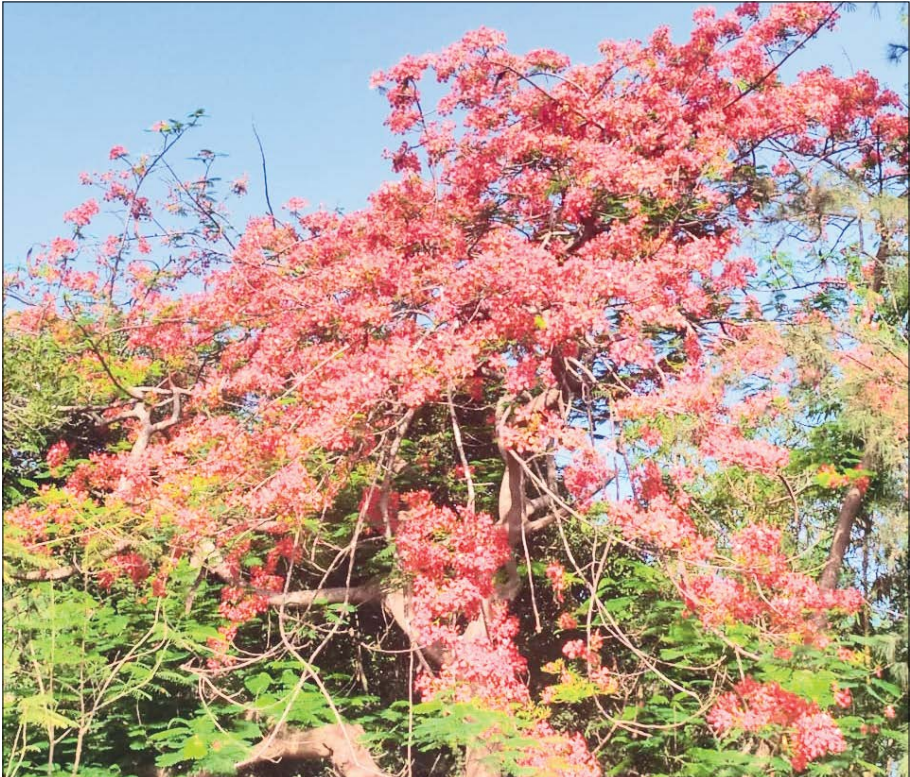
Separately, fishermen continue grappling with persistent navigation issues at the mouth of River Sal. The proposed training wall at Mobor—designed to address dangerous sandbar accumulation—remains stalled pending environmental clearances. "We're awaiting final approvals after SEAC requested additional studies," explained Fisheries Minister Nilkanth Halarnkar, noting the government has engaged CSIR-NIO for further research. Local trawler owners express frustration at the delays, having hoped the project would be completed before this monsoon season.

As the fishing community prepares for its annual break, the contrasting progress on different fronts—completed sanitation projects versus stalled navigation solutions—highlights the uneven pace of infrastructure development in Goa's crucial fishing industry.

"It would be better if the Fisheries Department utilises the time during the fishing ban period to conduct a general review, not just about the jetty but the overall fishing industry, so that we can start the next season on the front foot," said a boat owner in conclusion.

A TOUCH OF PARADISE

FRANCISCO BABAT TRINDADE



A Gulmohar tree blossoms as it brightens the landscape with its vibrant red-orange flowers at Candolim

Margao's New Market sitting on a fire bomb

Team Herald

MARGAO: Despite a close brush with disaster last December, fire safety in Margao's New Market remains grossly inadequate, with officials now revealing that the market lacks even the most basic fire safety management systems.

Officials from the Directorate of Fire and Emergency Services have raised serious concerns, noting that despite being equipped with fire hydrants, it is far from sufficient. The real problem, they say, lies in the lack of comprehensive fire safety planning, poor infrastructure, and severe parking congestion that hampers emergency response.

"There needs to be proper access inside the market. Right now, fire tenders can't move in during an emergency," said Gil Souza,



an officer with the fire services. "Out of the hundreds of shops here, only a handful have fire extinguishers—which are mandatory. No one knows when the last inspection was done."

The market, home to over 450 shops, sees hundreds of people daily, yet traders and shopkeepers complain that the promised overhead water tank remains pending and many fire hydrants are non-functional. The fear among business owners is

mounting, especially after the previous incident nearly turned catastrophic.

Souza also stressed the importance of basic fire training for market stakeholders.

"There is an urgent need to train shopkeepers, market security guards, and Margao Municipal Council (MMC) staff in fire safety and emergency response. Often, precious time is lost waiting for fire tenders. Immediate, informed action can reduce the damage," he added.

LIMITED ACCESS TO TENDERS, DEFUNCT FIRE HYDRANTS

- Fire dept said fire tender access is limited, and few of the over 450 shops have mandatory fire extinguishers. The last inspection date is unknown
- Traders said a promised overhead water tank is pending, and many fire hydrants are non-functional
- Fire officials stressed the urgent need for fire

- safety and emergency response training for shopkeepers, security, and MMC staff.
- Demand immediate action to minimise damage
- Claimed repeated requests to civic authorities have been ignored for years
- Want swift action from the MMC and other departments

Traders argue that fire safety measures have been ignored for years despite repeated requests to the civic authorities. The lack of regular checks, non-compliance with safety regulations, and absence of emergency preparedness have all contributed

to what many now fear could be deadly.

"The market is sitting on a fire-bomb," Souza warned, urging authorities to act swiftly.

The onus is on the Margao Municipal Council and other departments to implement safety measures.

'Internal roads transformed into dangerous thoroughfares'

Team Herald

MARGAO: As Road Safety Week kicked off in Panjim, residents of Salcete and South Goa have raised urgent concerns about critical safety challenges plaguing local road infrastructure.

The mounting public alarm comes in response to fatal accidents and ongoing risks that have transformed internal roads into dangerous thoroughfares.

The residents highlighted alarming issues surrounding drunken driving and unregulated rent-a-car services that dominate the region's transportation landscape. They point to systematic failures allowing tourists and local drivers to navigate treacherous road networks with minimal oversight and dangerous recklessness.

The community's primary concerns centre on junctions with blind turns, crumbling road edges without protective barriers, and critical crossings lacking basic warning signs. Residents have documented incidents where infrastructural deficiencies directly contributed to fatal accidents.

Rental vehicles pose a par-

ticular threat, with citizens noting inexperienced drivers frequently navigating narrow village roads at high speeds. Temporary speed bumps typically wash away during rainy seasons, rendering safety measures ineffective. In a recent development, it has also been reported that the National Highway Authority is removing speed bumps that are deemed too dangerous, following a petition filed before the Goa Human Rights Commission.

As Road Safety Week draws attention to transportation challenges, citizens demand comprehensive action. They call for immediate implementation of reflective signage, mandatory speed breakers, increased police patrols, and strict regulations on rental vehicle operations.

Locals argue that road safety is about preserving human lives, viewing the current infrastructure as a systemic failure that requires immediate intervention. The community remains united in its demand for meaningful action before another preventable tragedy becomes a statistic in the region's ongoing road safety crisis.

Ensuring road safety in Panjim, Margao for pedestrians, cyclists

Capital city hosts drive highlighting importance of traffic discipline; campaign in commercial capital aims at creating safe road conditions

Team Herald

PANJIM/MARGAO: As part of Global Road Safety Week, the Panjim Police conducted a road safety awareness drive in the city to highlight the importance of traffic discipline, while an awareness campaign was launched in Margao, aimed at creating safe road conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.

In the capital city, the initiative also focused on the safety of cyclists. Several individuals were fined for parking their vehicles on pavements, obstructing pedestrian movement. According to officials, this exercise will be carried out daily and is expected to continue throughout the year. The drive was led by Cedric Souza Cordeiro, Assistant Director of Transport.

Authorities began enforcing a recent order prohibiting taxis from parking within Panjim city limits. Challans were issued for unauthorised taxi parking. The drive is a coordinated



Police personnel take part in the drive in Panjim, focusing on the safety of cyclists

effort involving the Corporation of the City of Panaji (CCP), traffic police, and district police.

Roland Martins from GOACAN, highlighted concerns about leakage from air conditioning units onto public roads. GOACAN had earlier brought this issue to the CCP's attention, and a public notice has since been issued to address the problem.

In Margao, the campaign was inaugurated with a rally through key streets in the town. Participants included officials from the Transport Department, Traffic Police,

Urban Development authorities, and local municipal representatives.

Speaking to the media, Lorna Fernandes of GOACAN said, "Our streets must be safe for everyone—not just motorists. Pedestrians and cyclists face daily risks, especially in urban areas with poor infrastructure. This drive is our effort to raise awareness and push for change."

The rally featured banners, placards, and slogans promoting road safety, responsible driving, and the need for infrastructure such as footpaths,

cycling lanes, and pedestrian crossings. Leaflets were distributed to both motorists and pedestrians, highlighting key safety practices like using zebra crossings, obeying speed limits, and giving right of way to non-motorised road users.

Officials emphasised that road safety is not just the responsibility of the government but of every citizen. "We need both better infrastructure and behavioural change. This campaign is just the beginning," said a senior Transport Department official.

Kept in the dark on Sonsoddo waste plant: Fatorda MLA

Team Herald

MARGAO: Fatorda MLA Vijai Sardesai has criticised the State government, Margao Municipal Council (MMC), and neighbouring MLAs for keeping him uninformed about recent activities at Sonsoddo, including ONGC's proposal to establish a waste treatment plant at the legacy garbage dump site.

He addressed the media following an inspection at Marlem, where work on constructing a retaining wall had begun. It may be recalled that a landslide occurred in this area last year, affecting the surrounding residential community.

The current construction work aims to prevent similar incidents from recurring. Sardesai expressed gratitude to the Water Resources Department (WRD) for assisting with the project. When responding to media

queries about recent Sonsoddo developments, he questioned why he was not informed and emphasised that the public should be the first to be taken into confidence.

He questioned the motives behind involving ONGC, especially when the government had previously announced its own plans for various works at the site. Sardesai also highlighted that the government has kept both him and the citizens in the dark about the Margao Master Plan, speculating whether vested interests were at play that would benefit only a select few rather than the broader community.

The Fatorda MLA and Goa Forward Party (GFP) president asserted that the public has a right to know about such plans and called for greater transparency in these initiatives to ensure that there is proper accountability.