

MMC draws flak for permitting trade in crumbling buildings

PROFITS OVER PUBLIC SAFETY? Citizens question the Margao civic body's inaction in cancelling the trade licences of shops that continue to operate from unsafe buildings

Team Herald

MARGAO: As concerns mount over unsafe buildings in Margao, a group of citizens has raised serious questions regarding the Margao Municipal Council's (MMC) inaction, particularly over the continued issuance and renewal of trade licences to businesses operating out of such hazardous structures.

"How can the civic body remain silent and take no action against trade licences, even when it knows businesses are running from buildings declared unsafe?" citizens are questioning. According to the citizens, the civic body should have asked the business establishments to vacate the premises as a safety measure.

When confronted with these concerns, MMC officials admitted that some businesses are indeed operating from unsafe premises and hinted that action may finally be on the horizon. The Council has indicated



it may revoke trade licences of such establishments—but only after the ongoing re-verification exercise of unsafe buildings is completed and a report is submitted.

Currently, a joint team from the MMC and the Mamlatdar's office is carrying out inspections to assess the structural condition of these buildings.

Over the past three days, several buildings have been re-inspected, and the team is documenting commercial establishments functioning within them.

Sources have revealed that around 25 to 30 busi-

ness establishments are currently operating out of buildings previously marked unsafe. Despite being fully aware of the risks, many traders continue to run their businesses—reportedly due to ongoing disputes between landlords and tenants, which have stalled remedial action. Sources say the leases for most of these old buildings are rent-controlled—meaning the owners cannot increase the rent, which is stuck at paltry sums from the 1960's.

As a result, the tenants refuse to move out

Yes, trade licences can be revoked for those operating in unsafe buildings. The re-verification process is currently underway, and once the report is on the table, we will surely initiate action
—Damodar Shirodkar, MMC Chairperson

and the landlords refuse to maintain these dilapidated structures, most of which suffer extensive water damage.

This issue has gained renewed urgency following two recent incidents of partial building collapses, which reignited public debate and prompted authorities to revisit the matter more seriously.

Speaking to **O Herald**, social activist Savio Coutinho criticised the MMC for failing to act swiftly.

"It is the civic body's duty to immediately revoke the trade licences of establishments operating in unsafe

buildings. Shockingly, what we've discovered is that not only were licences not cancelled, but some were even renewed, despite the known danger. It is high time the civic body acts," he said.

MMC Chairperson Damodar Shirodkar acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and confirmed that revoking trade licences is a possibility.

"Yes, trade licences can be revoked for those operating in unsafe buildings. The re-verification process is currently underway, and once the report is on the table, we will surely initiate action," he assured.

He also noted that while 21 buildings have been identified as unsafe, some owners have since submitted stability certificates in an effort to prove the structures are sound.

Citizens and stakeholders now await the MMC's final report, which will determine whether safety will finally take precedence over administrative delays.

Rawanfond bridge damage: Citizens file police complaint against contractors

Team Herald

MARGAO: A formal complaint has been filed with the Margao Town Police Station seeking criminal action under multiple sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) against the contractor and consultant involved in the construction of the Rawanfond 6-Lane Road Over Bridge (ROB).

The complaint names M.S. Khurana Engineering Ltd (the contractor) and Shrikhande Consultants Pvt.



The railway overbridge has been closed to traffic since May 21 after part of the retaining wall collapsed; locals register a complaint at the Margao Town Police Station (below)



Ltd (the consultant) and accuses them of criminal negligence (Section 290), mischief (Section 324), criminal breach of trust (Section 316), and criminal conspiracy (Section 61) under the BNS.

According to the complaint, the project—executed by the Goa State Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (GSIDC)—has shown less than 10% progress since its scheduled start in December 2022. The stipulated date for completion is December 22,

2024, but the delay and lack of preparedness ahead of the monsoon have allegedly put public lives at risk.

The complainants allege that the contractor, with the knowledge of the consultant, excavated the embankment of the existing bridge to begin construction but failed to install any earth-retaining structures or preventive safety measures despite the imminent arrival of monsoon rains.

As a result, initial showers have already caused soil erosion, leading to cracks on the

approach road and a partial closure of the area.

"This is not just technical incompetence—it is criminal negligence," said Savio Coutinho, a local activist and former Margao municipality chief. "People are suffering due to traffic diversions, the government is losing revenue on repairs and traffic management, and most disturbingly, public safety has been blatantly compromised. An FIR must be registered against the contractor and consultant without delay." The complaint also raises concerns that the delay may be a calculated move to invoke the "escalation clause" in the contract, leading to increased costs and further burden on the public exchequer.

Currently, the incomplete ROB and erosion-hit approach road have forced a partial diversion of traffic, leading to congestion in various parts of Margao and requiring additional police deployment for traffic control.

Govt cancels power shutdown scheduled for Sunday in S Goa

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Goa Electricity Department has cancelled the planned power shutdown in South Goa that was scheduled for maintenance work on Sunday, June 1. In a press release issued on Friday, the department cited heavy and continuous rainfall as the reason for calling off the outage.

The cancelled shutdown was expected to affect several areas across South Goa, including the talukas of Sanguem, Quepem, Salcete, Mormugao, and parts of the Shiroda and St. Andre constituencies. A related public notice had also warned of water supply disruptions from the Selaulim Water Works due to the scheduled electricity outage.

Following the cancellation, the government confirmed that regular water supply will be maintained on June 1 and 2.

Officials have said that a fresh date for the postponed maintenance work will be announced later.

DRESSING THE WOUND

ANISHA FRANCIS



The hill at Verem, Reis Magos — stripped of its green cover and excavated for a massive redevelopment project — is now draped in green mesh to prevent landslides and soil erosion during the monsoon

New drains in Cuncolim fail; NGO accuses Water Resources Dept of shoddy work

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Green Goa Foundation (GGF) has raised serious allegations against the Water Resources Department (WRD), accusing it of executing substandard drainage works in the villages of Dandora and Masconi in Cuncolim.

The complaint, filed with the relevant authorities, calls for an immediate inquiry and stringent action against the officers and contractors involved.

According to GGF Chairman Raison Almeida,

the recently constructed drainage system in these villages has already started to collapse with the arrival of pre-monsoon showers, highlighting the poor quality of work.

"The drainage system has clearly not been built as per the required specifications. The fact that it failed even before the monsoons have fully begun is proof of the substandard nature of the work. This has caused serious inconvenience to the residents of the area," Almeida said.

The Foundation has de-

The Green Goa Foundation has declared that if the government fails to rectify the poor drainage system within 30 days, it would approach the High Court for legal recourse. The NGO also demanded that no payments be released to the officers and the contractors involved in the project

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involved in the project until a thorough investigation is completed.

GGF believes that the shoddy execution of the work may have been done with the intention of personal gain, and has called for accountability at all levels.

In its written complaint, GGF has given the authorities a 30-day deadline to act on the matter, warning that failure to initiate appropriate action will compel the organisation to approach the High Court.

"We call upon the authorities to take this is-

sue seriously and initiate action within 30 days. If not, we will move the High Court to seek justice for the people of these villages," the complaint stated.

Local residents have echoed similar concerns, stating that poorly executed public works have become a common issue in rural areas, often leading to waste of public funds and prolonged inconvenience.

As of now, the Water Resources Department has not issued an official statement regarding the complaint.

Gram sabha flags water hyacinth menace, seeks Collector's support

Team Herald

MARGAO: The growing menace of water hyacinth dominated discussions at the Cavellim Village Panchayat's Gram Sabha held on Sunday.

Concerned over the unchecked spread of the invasive weed in River Sal, villagers and panchayat members called for immediate intervention, warning that the situation could lead to environmental degradation, disrupt fishing activities, and cause flooding during the monsoon.

Taking serious note of the issue, the Panchayat resolved to write to the Collector of South Goa requesting that a meeting be convened with concerned MLAs and panchayat bodies to chalk out a permanent solution.

"Water hyacinth is not just an eyesore—it is threatening our ecosystem, affecting fishing activities, and contributing to waterlogging. We need coordinated action to



resolve this urgently," said Sarpanch Dixon Vaz, while addressing the gathering.

The meeting also saw discussion on the issue of fishermen's houses, with a proposal to conduct a resurvey of the structures. The Panchayat agreed to take up the matter with the government to seek regularisation or necessary permissions for the existing houses, many of which are

reportedly caught in legal and bureaucratic limbo.

Another point of concern raised by villagers was the Benaullim-Mobor road, particularly whether it has been officially acquired by the Public Works Department (PWD). Landowners claimed they had not received any compensation or notices, despite a High Court order pertaining to the road's status. The Panchayat assured residents that it would follow up with PWD to clarify the matter and protect the rights of landowners.

Sarpanch Dixon Vaz also reviewed the Panchayat's achievements over the past two and a half years, stating that despite significant investments in development works, revenue collection had increased.

He assured the public that desilting and clearing of waterways on both the River Sal and the Arabian Sea sides would remain a top priority, particularly with the onset of the monsoon season.

MAX. TEMP 27.8 °C
MIN. TEMP 24.6 °C

idharudhar



Can't evacuate! Approvals and paperwork are still pending

Activists seek cop's suspension over flawed FIR in Vasco hit-and-run

MARGAO: Activists and family members of 35-year-old Rani Bind, who was critically injured in a hit-and-run near Chicalim junction last Friday, have demanded the suspension of Inquiry Officer constable Damodar Mayekar for allegedly filing a false FIR.

Protesters who marched to the Vasco police station on Thursday claimed the FIR was "80% false" and accused Mayekar of mishandling the case. They also alleged that the driver, identified as Ullas Naik, was intoxicated and fled the scene without offering help. The collision killed Rani's pet dog on the spot and left her battling for life at GMC.

Activists further accused Naik's wife Roopa, an RTO officer, of attempting to tamper with CCTV footage by "setting" with nearby shopkeepers.

The accident occurred when Rani, after walking her dog, was standing near the road divider. A speeding car driven by Naik allegedly hit her, then collided with two more vehicles before jumping the divider and landing on the opposite lane.

Activists are demanding that Naik be booked under harsher charges and that all evidence tampering attempts be investigated thoroughly.