

# LICENCING ERRORS ALLOWING BUSINESSES TO OPERATE IN MARGAO'S UNSAFE BUILDINGS

Emergency demolitions expose critical weaknesses in town's building safety oversight

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** A week of emergency demolitions in Margao has exposed critical weaknesses in the town's building safety oversight, raising alarm about the effectiveness of current municipal systems in protecting public welfare.

The crisis came to a head when workers dismantled dangerous sections of the old Bank of Baroda building on Sunday, following a partial collapse that damaged three vehicles the previous week.

South Goa District Collector Egna Cleetus, acting under emergency powers of the Disaster Management Act, ordered immediate demolition of overhanging portions from both the Bank of Baroda structure and a nearby comunidade building.

"The overhanging sections posed an imminent threat to public safety," officials stated, as roads leading to Gandhi Market and New Market were closed until noon to facilitate the demolition work. The exercise, carried out by PWD's Works Division VIII, saw workers using heavy drill-

ing equipment to carefully remove unstable portions while clearing debris from the affected roadway.

However, the emergency response has illuminated a more troubling pattern. The Margao Municipal Council (MMC) had previously identified 56 buildings under Section 190 of the Goa Municipalities Act as being "in ruins or likely to fall", yet many continue to operate active businesses with valid trade licences.

This contradiction stems from a fundamental gap in the municipal licencing system. The digitised trade licence process, designed for efficiency, lacks mandatory physical inspections of premises. Businesses can obtain operational permits within days by simply uploading documents online, with no verification of structural safety conditions.

The problem became apparent when former MMC Chief Officer (Co) Gaurish Shankhwalkar discovered a shop operating on the ground floor of a building already marked for demolition on Isidorio Baptista Road. The business owner

## TROUBLING PATTERN

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## FUNDAMENTAL GAP IN LICENCING SYSTEM

- The digitised trade licence process, designed for efficiency, lacks mandatory physical inspections of premises
- Businesses can obtain operational permits within days by simply uploading documents online, with no verification of structural safety conditions



## DISCREPANCIES IN OFFICIAL RECORDS

- While 56 buildings received Sec 190 notices, only 21 appeared on the unsafe structures list submitted to the South Goa Collector last week
- This gap suggests numerous hazardous buildings may be operating without proper oversight

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- Demolition costs for the Bank of Baroda building will be recovered from the property owner through the Mamlatdar of Salcete Taluka, as mandated under disaster management protocols

was reportedly unaware their premises had been condemned, highlighting the system's failure to communicate critical safety information.

"When licences continue being granted to businesses in buildings already identified as dangerous, it defeats the entire purpose of safety legislation," explained a local business attorney familiar with municipal law.

Adding to concerns are significant discrepancies in official records. While 56 buildings received Section 190 notices, only 21 appeared on the unsafe structures list submitted to the South Goa Collector last week. This gap suggests numerous hazardous buildings may be operating without proper oversight.

The financial implications are equally serious.

Demolition costs for the Bank of Baroda building will be recovered from the property owner through the Mamlatdar of Salcete Taluka, as mandated under disaster management protocols.

The Collector had to specifically direct fund allocation under Section 49 of the Disaster Management Act, which requires government departments to budget for disaster man-

agement activities.

Before his recent transfer, Shankhwalkar had instructed MMC's technical team to clearly mark all unsafe buildings in the system to prevent future licencing errors. However, this directive still remains unimplemented, leaving the fundamental problem unresolved.

A senior MMC official confirmed that a supplementary list of pending unsafe structures is being prepared for submission to the district Collector, but the timeline for comprehensive system reforms remains unclear.

The incidents have sparked broader questions about municipality's accountability and the balance between administrative efficiency and public safety. Concerns mount about the structural integrity of Margao's aging building stock and the adequacy of current monitoring systems.

Local authorities now face the challenge of reconciling rapid digital licencing processes with thorough safety oversight, while ensuring that businesses and residents are adequately informed about structural risks in their vicinity.

# Restriction on public gatherings around Goa Meat Complex

South Goa DM order prohibits assembly of four or more persons

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** To prevent potential disturbances during Bakrid, the South Goa District Magistrate has imposed restrictions on public gatherings around the Goa Meat Complex in Usgao, Ponda.

Effective from Monday, the order prohibits the assembly of four or more persons in and around the periphery of the Goa Meat Complex and within a one-kilometre radius of the modernised abattoir at the same location. The restriction will remain in force for seven days, ending at midnight next Monday.

The order was issued by District Magistrate Egna Cleetus, IAS, under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023. The move follows a formal request from the Sub-Divisional Police Officer of Ponda, who sought preventive measures to avoid any breach of peace in the area, citing past incidents during the Bakrid period.

In previous years, gatherings near the Goa Meat Complex had led to the display of anti-slaughter banners and acts of intimidation, prompting concerns of renewed tensions.

As part of preparations for the Bakrid festival, the All Goa Muslim Jamaats Association is expected to transport animals to the modernised abattoir from Wednesday to Saturday. These animals will be brought in from other States through Mollem Gate in Dharbandora taluka and Pollem Gate in Canacona taluka. To ensure compliance with transport guidelines and the directions of the High Court of Bombay at Goa, officials from the Department of Animal

Husbandry and Veterinary Services will be stationed at these entry points. The High Court's earlier order, passed on a Thursday in September 2014, continues to govern the monitoring of such animal movements.

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Although the police had initially suggested a wider restriction zone extending up to four kilometres and for a longer period of nine days starting Sunday, the final magisterial order narrowed the scope to a one-kilometre radius and a seven-day duration beginning Monday. The authorities emphasised that the restriction was necessary to maintain public order and commercial harmony, especially in view of the sensitivities associated with the festival.

Violations of the order will attract punitive action under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023. The Deputy Collector and Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Ponda has been authorised to monitor compliance and initiate legal proceedings against offenders, including lodging complaints with the appropriate judicial magistrate.

The order, dated Monday, was issued from the District Collector's office in Margao and is part of routine precautionary measures undertaken annually during Bakrid to prevent communal or commercial unrest near slaughterhouses.

# Paroda residents fear flooding in the absence of culverts on elevated road

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** At the gram sabha meeting, residents of Paroda voiced concern over the absence of culverts along the village's main road, which was recently elevated to tackle frequent flooding.

They warned that without culverts to drain rainwater, areas like the Church could still face inundation

## LOCAL CONCERNS

- The residents said raising the road height without adequate culverts may still lead to flooding near the Church
- Questioned why drainage was not included, considering the road's history of monsoon waterlogging
- Requested an update on panchayat development works, specifically a ward-wise breakdown of completed, ongoing, and pending projects
- Noted this information was not provided at the gram sabha, indicating a lack of transparency

despite the road height being raised by the Public Works Department (PWD). The locals questioned why

drainage provisions were not included in the project, especially given the road's history of waterlogging during monsoon.

Former sarpanch Gabriel Fernandes sought an update on developmental works carried out by the panchayat. He told the media that he had requested the sarpanch to present a ward-wise breakdown of completed, ongoing, and

pending works.

However, Fernandes said no such details were provided at the gram sabha, adding that there was a lack of transparency regarding the projects undertaken over the last three years.

The meeting ended with villagers urging authorities to urgently construct culverts to prevent fresh flooding during the upcoming rains.

# Raia gets new Dy Sarpanch

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Manuel Rodrigues was elected as the new Deputy Sarpanch of Village Panchayat of Raia.

Manuel was the only candidate to file his nomination for the post of Deputy Sarpanch. While six panch members attended the special meeting convened by the Director of Panchayats on Monday, five remained absent for the meeting.

# Stakeholders seek clarity on Margao's new wholesale fish market operations

Stress comprehensive planning must precede the market's launch; GSIDC modifies artwork following criticism

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Traditional fishermen, boat owners and wholesale traders have urged the South Goa Planning and Development Authority (SGPDA) to provide greater transparency regarding operational arrangements at Margao's redeveloped wholesale fish market facility.

The maritime community has expressed apprehensions about how trading blocks will be distributed within the new complex, with calls mounting for dedicated sections to be allocated separately for fish traders and traditional fishing operators.

These operational concerns have emerged as the primary challenge facing the project's commission-

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ing, according to industry stakeholders who emphasise the need for clear guidelines before the facility becomes operational.

Fatorda MLA Vijai Sardesai has highlighted the importance of establishing proper mechanisms for facility maintenance, particularly concerning toilet facilities and other essential

amenities. The Goa Forward Party (GFP) president stressed that comprehensive planning must precede the market's launch to ensure sustainable operations.

Meanwhile, the Goa State Infrastructure Development Corporation (GSIDC) has undertaken modifications to artwork displayed on the market building following criticism over inappropriate imagery. The original murals featured marine mammals like whales and dolphins, species that are protected under wildlife laws and not part of Goa's traditional fishing practices.

GSIDC officials confirmed that artists are now replacing the controversial depictions with representations of local fish varieties commonly found in Goan waters. The

decision came after multiple stakeholders raised objections during SGPDA meetings about the disconnect between the artwork and regional fishing heritage.

"Our intention was never to suggest these protected species were meant for commercial trade. The revisions will better reflect the authentic fishing culture of our coastal communities," explained a senior GSIDC representative.

According to market stakeholders, the wholesale fish market redevelopment represents a significant infrastructure investment aimed at modernising Goa's fishing industry, but its success will largely depend on addressing the operational concerns raised by the fishing community before the facility opens to traders.

# Church leaders back national federation proposal to promote unity, dialogue

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Church leaders from across India reached a broad consensus on forming a national federation of Churches during a key ecumenical meeting convened by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) recently in Bengaluru.

The proposal to create one apex body to promote unity and dialogue among Christian denominations received strong backing, with participants agreeing that other existing ecumenical organisations could function as subsidiaries under its umbrella. The gathering also resolved to celebrate the Jubilee Year 2025 and the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea with special programmes on September 11 and 12 this year, to coincide with the next National Ecumenical Bishops' Fellowship Meeting.



Church leaders from across India during a key ecumenical meeting convened by CBCI in Bengaluru, recently

Held at St John's National Academy of Health Sciences, the Second National Ecumenical Bishops' Fellowship and Consultation Meeting brought together around 35 Archbishops, Bishops, Church Heads, and delegates from a wide spectrum of Christian denominations. The core purpose of the meeting was to foster deeper communion among Churches and give fresh momentum to the ecumenical movement in India. Participants engaged in discussions on CBCI's proposal to establish a nation-

al federation of Churches comprising the Presidents, Moderators, Metropolitan, and Chief Heads of Councils and Synods.

The event opened with the hymn "We are One in the Spirit..." and an ecumenical prayer service adapted from the Resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2025. The theme for the year, "Do you believe this?" (John 11:26), commemorates 1,700 years since the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. A tribute was also paid to the late Pope Francis, remembered as a builder of ecumenical

bridges, while prayers were offered for the new Pope Leo XIV.

In his inaugural address, CBCI President Archbishop Mar Andrews Thazhath called for unity in response to rising attacks on Christians, urging Churches to stand together in solidarity. The minutes of the previous meeting in September 2024 were presented by Fr Dr Anthoniraj Thumma, coordinator of the fellowship. Bishop Joshua Mar Ignathios, Chairman of the CBCI Office for Dialogue and Desk for Ecumenism, delivered the keynote on the federation proposal, which was then discussed in an open ecumenical forum. While most delegates affirmed the idea, many suggested that detailed guidelines be developed, and that clarity be established regarding its relationship with existing national Christian forums.

The meeting ended with the hymn "Bind Us Together".

# Restoration of Dr F L Gomes' ancestral home on the cards

Archives & Archaeology Dept to inspect site within fortnight; MPLAD fund delay flagged

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Minister for Archives and Archaeology, Subhash Phal Dessai, assured that the ancestral residence of iconic nationalist Dr Francisco Luis Gomes, currently in a dilapidated state, could be restored and possibly declared a protected archaeological monument—provided there are no legal encumbrances on the property.

Addressing a gathering at the official function held in Navelim to mark the birth anniversary of Dr Gomes, Phal Dessai stated that the government was committed to preserving the legacy of the 19th-century patriot. He stressed that even if the land is caught in a dispute, efforts will be made in collaboration with the local MLA and others to carry out the restoration.

"We will see what is legally feasible. Funds will not be a constraint. I will consult the Chief Minister and deploy a team from the Archives and Archaeology Department within the next 15 days to evaluate the condition of the house and



whether it qualifies for notification as a heritage monument or even as a museum," he said.

During the event, the Minister also took note of the delay in utilising MPLAD funds allocated for the Dr Francisco Luis Gomes memorial. When former Rajya Sabha MP Luizinho Faleiro pointed out that Rs 25 lakh sanctioned under his MPLAD quota remained unspent, Phal Dessai instructed South Goa Collector Egna Cleetus—who also oversees MPLAD implementa-

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tion—to examine the reason for the delay.

With the memorial site waterlogged due to clogged drains, the venue had to be shifted to a nearby school. Taking note of this, Phal Dessai asked the concerned authorities to immediately take up desilting work around the monument to prevent recurrence during the monsoons.

Paying tribute to Dr Gomes, Phal Dessai described him as a towering intellectual who

represented Goa and India in the Portuguese Parliament long before the Indian National Congress was born. "He voiced the aspirations of Goans and Indians in Lisbon. He called for liberty and equal rights at a time when such demands were unheard of," the Minister said.

He also lauded Faleiro's decades-long efforts to honour Dr Gomes' contribution. "Dr Gomes believed in transferring power to the people. He was ahead of his time," he said.

Faleiro, who also addressed the audience, recalled that the initiative to safeguard the nationalist's memory had begun 40 years ago with the establishment of a library and children's park in his honour. He thanked Chief Minister Pramod Sawant for extending full support to the memorial's upkeep and enhancement.

South Goa SP Tikam Singh, Navelim Sarpanch Michael Cardozo, Zilla Panchayat member Cipru Cardozo, freedom fighter Rohidas Desai, and residents were also present.

MAX. TEMP 32.4 °C  
MIN. TEMP 25.0 °C

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Captain, you've got just three options to fly through today.

