

# Women's group flags child abuse in street begging across Margao

Beggars have returned, with infants in arms; Bailancho Ekvott warns of rising public disorder

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Women's rights organisation Bailancho Ekvott has raised serious concern over the resurgence of beggars—particularly those using children to evoke sympathy—at prominent public spaces in Margao, despite earlier action by authorities. In a strongly worded statement to the media, the group urged the government to address the issue firmly and consistently, stressing that begging by able-bodied adults and minors is not only illegal but also exploits public sympathy under the guise of poverty.

Earlier this year, the group had petitioned South Goa Collector Egna Cleetus to act against the rise in begging and anti-social activity near traffic junctions, especially around



Power House Junction. The Collector, in coordination with the Superintendent of Police (South), promptly cleared the area—a move the group publicly appreciated.

However, Bailancho Ekvott said the situation has since reverted. "They are back again, all over—especially the Power House Junction," said Auda Viegas, who heads the organisation. She warned that the issue may go beyond destitution. "There is no clue about

who they are—whether Bangladeshi, Pakistani, or persons used by thieves to gather information about locals' movements to facilitate robberies," the statement read.

The group maintained that the use of children in begging constitutes abuse and called for consistent law enforcement.

Beyond begging, Bailancho Ekvott highlighted the broader issue of public spaces being occupied and misused, particularly around Margao rail-

**“Begging is an offence, especially when able-bodied persons use vulnerable children to gain sympathy. We have been urging people not to give them money, as it only ends up being misused”**  
—Auda Viegas, president, Bailancho Ekvott

way station. "The government must address the growing problem of footpath dwelling, cooking, drying clothes on railings, sleeping, and unauthorised parking of vehicles at the railway station," the statement said. It also flagged the movement of unidentified individuals carrying babies through traffic, warning that this could pose a public safety threat.

Referring to a recent video

shared widely on social media—reportedly showing a drunken brawl between "half-dressed men" in Margao—the group warned that such scenes damage Goa's image as a tourist destination. "Ours is a touristic state. Safety, security, and a peaceful experience are the rights of every tourist and visitor," said Viegas.

Reiterating its appeal to the public, Bailancho Ekvott urged people to refrain from giving money to beggars carrying infants, saying it only fuels a cycle of exploitation. Instead, the group recommended that those engaged in street begging be repatriated to their home states or countries, where they can be rehabilitated. "The weather is not suitable for babies, infants, or children to live on the streets," the statement added.

# NGO urges action against 'Peeping Tom', probe into lapses in hostel security

Team Herald

On May 19, a male student of the Goa Dental College allegedly trespassed into the girls' hostel and filmed students bathing

**MARGAO:** Bailancho Ekvott has written to the Goa State Commission for Women, urging immediate action in the wake of a voyeurism incident involving a male student at the girls' hostel at the Goa Dental College. The group has also petitioned the Director General of Police (DGP) Goa and the Dean of the College to ensure accountability and prevent further violations of student safety.

In her letter dated June 3, Bailancho Ekvott president Auda Viegas called for an inquiry into possible lapses by hostel staff and security guards, pointing out the gravity of the case and the need for institutional respon-

sibility. "It needs to be investigated whether such incidents have been happening in the past with active connivance of the security guards," Viegas wrote.

Expressing concern that the Goa State Commission for Women has remained "passive" despite the seriousness of the incident, Viegas said, "Anything that affects the privacy, safety, and security of women is the reason for the Commission to play a proactive role," she stated.

The incident, which took place on May 19, involved a final-year male dental student alleged-

ly trespassing into the women's hostel and filming two students while they were bathing. While the matter has already drawn widespread attention, Bailancho Ekvott's intervention now focuses on accountability and institutional response.

The group urged the Commission to ensure that a proper inquiry is conducted and disciplinary action initiated against any staff found to have been negligent. Viegas expressed confidence that the Chairperson would act on the concerns raised and prevent such violations from being repeated.

## A FRESH START



Parents queue outside a uniform centre in St Inez on Tuesday, rushing to buy school uniforms ahead of Wednesday's reopening

# Water channels in Agasaim turn black; activists blame toxic chemicals

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Several parts of Agasaim village have turned following the clandestine discharge of hazardous chemicals along traditional rainwater run-off paths, sparking grave concerns for public health, agriculture, and local ecosystems. The Goa unit of Bharat Mukti Morcha (BMM), which investigated the matter on the ground, warned that large portions of Agasaim have been poisoned due to what it described as an ecocidal act committed near the Agasaim-Pilar border.

With the onset of the monsoon in recent weeks, black fluid, allegedly laden with toxic substances has been

**ECOCIDE? Pollution threatens groundwater, agriculture & fisheries, with several paddy fields prepared for cultivation now coated in black residue**



flowing through the area, visibly staining the water and transforming it into foul-smelling, inky streams. Several paddy fields, which were due for cultivation, now lie coated in black residue.

for irrigation and soil health, have been reduced to gutters that ultimately drain into the Panvel and Zuari rivers. The BMM said this pollution poses a serious threat to marine ecosystems downstream.

The group highlighted the wider implications of the

contamination, which it said could trigger the collapse of agriculture and fisheries, damage biodiversity, and have severe consequences for public health. "All the agencies of the state must act systematically and in coordination to trace those responsible and bring them to light," BMM said, stressing the urgent need for remedial action to restore the damaged land and purify the polluted waters.

St Andre MLA Viresh Borkar has taken up the issue with the Goa State Pollution Control Board and the state health department, urging both agencies to conduct an inspection and take appropriate action in the public interest.

# Konkan Rly braces for rains with 636 patrol staff, tech

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** As meteorologists forecast a challenging monsoon along India's western coast, Konkan Railway Corporation Limited (KRCL) has deployed 636 trained personnel for 24/7 monsoon patrolling across its 760km route from Maharashtra to Karnataka.

KRCL's annual monsoon timetable, effective from June 15 to October 20, 2025, includes revised sectional speeds and enhanced safety protocols. "We've activated a comprehensive action plan covering infrastructure reinforcement, real-time monitoring, and emergency response," said KRCL Chief Public Relations Officer Girish Karandikar.

The railway's proactive measures have earned it a

strong safety record over the past decade, with no major disruptions due to boulder falls. Karandikar credited this to sustained geo-safety works that have significantly reduced landslips.

Specialised equipment has been deployed at critical points, including BRN-mounted excavators at Chiplun, Ratnagiri, Kankavali, and Verna. Rail Maintenance Vehicles are placed at nine locations from Veer to Udipi, while Tower Wagons stand by at key stations including Ratnagiri and Karwar.

Speed restrictions are in place for low visibility, with trains slowing to 40 km/h during heavy rain. Services are suspended if water levels exceed 100mm, resuming only after safety clearance.

Technological upgrades in-

clude self-recording rain gauges at nine stations and flood monitoring systems for major rivers like Kali, Savitri, and Vashishti. Anemometers installed on key viaducts track wind velocity.

Emergency preparedness includes Self-Propelled Accident Relief Medical Vans with operating theatres at Ratnagiri and Verna, and an Accident Relief Train on standby at Verna. Medical teams are stationed at six locations including Chiplun, Madgaon, and Udipi.

KRCL remains in constant coordination with the IMD for daily forecasts. Passengers can check train status via the website or helpline 139. Control rooms in Belapur, Ratnagiri, and Madgaon will operate round the clock during the monsoon.

# Citizens cry foul over perpetually waterlogged Seraulim subway

**MARGAO:** Locals in Seraulim are expressing frustration over the condition of the underpass, which has become waterlogged once again during the rains. Even after the rainfall ceased, the area remained flooded, raising fresh concerns about the poor design of the underpass that renders it unusable during the monsoon season.

It may be recalled that in March, an inspection was conducted with all concerned authorities, with the aim of ensuring that such waterlogging issues would not recur this monsoon. However, locals have lamented that if this is the situation at the beginning of the monsoon season, it is certain that the underpass will remain inaccessible to them. This creates significant inconvenience not only for local residents but also for general commuters and residents of surrounding areas who rely on the subway for quicker access, given that alternative routes are considerably longer in comparison.

# Fatorda locals irked as sewage flows onto streets

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Sewage overflow in Fatorda has sparked serious health concerns among residents, who fear the situation could lead to the outbreak of diseases such as dengue and malaria.

The problem began after a tanker was reportedly caught discharging sewage directly into roadside gutters near the Nehru Stadium, resulting in and wastewater spilling onto the streets.

Locals expressed alarm over the public health risk and have demanded that such discharge be stopped immediately. They have also urged authorities to implement a long-term solution to prevent the re-

currence of such hazards. Meanwhile, elsewhere in Fatorda, six sewer manholes were damaged during underground cabling works carried out by the Electricity Department, worsening the crisis by causing additional raw sewage to overflow onto the roads.

The incident triggered fresh outrage among residents, with Fatorda MLA Vijai Sardesai warning of a potential epidemic if the issue is not addressed without delay. Sardesai criticised the Public Works Department and Sewerage Corporation for poor maintenance and held the Electricity Department responsible for the damage. He said a local contractor has been

approached to carry out temporary remedial work within a week, and that he has taken up the matter directly with the Chief Minister.

In a separate and unrelated development, the South Goa Planning and Development Authority (SGPDA) began clearing clogged drains outside the retail fish market at Fatorda-Margao. This followed complaints about a strong stench and waterlogging in the vicinity, caused by overflowing drains that had not been cleaned in some time. The work is aimed at improving sanitation around the market area, which has also been a source of concern for nearby vendors and residents.

# 530 Agniveers finish training, join Indian Army's Corps of Signals

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** A grand Passing Out Parade was held at the 2 Signal Training Centre, Goa, marking the completion of 31 weeks of military and technical training for 530 Agniveers of the Indian Army's Corps of Signals.

Brigadier Harsh Bhatia, Commandant of the centre, reviewed the parade and congratulated the recruits on their transformation from civilians into trained soldiers. He praised the high standards maintained by the training staff and thanked the families for their support.

The parade showcased the discipline and coordina-

tion instilled during training. Outstanding performers were recognised: Agniveers Patil Piyush Ramesh, Rajat Indauliya, and Govind Kumar were awarded the Overall 1st in Merit Medal in their respective courses. Agniveer Devara Siva was named Best in Physical & Sports, while Agniveer Biaksh Gauda received the Best in Drill award.

Following the parade, Brigadier Bhatia met with the Agniveers' families and presented the 'Gaurav Padak' to parents, acknowledging their vital role in the young soldiers' development. He assured them that their sons would serve the nation with honour.

# Planting heritage: Young hands sow seeds for Goa's future

Children in Benaulim join ambitious cashew plantation drive aimed at reviving Goa's 400-year-old agricultural tradition while fostering environmental consciousness among the next generation

KARSTEN MIRANDA

**MARGAO:** In an inspiring initiative to reconnect Goa's youth with their agricultural roots, a large number of children recently took up spades and saplings to plant trees that have shaped the state's landscape and culture for over four centuries. The cashew sapling drive in Benaulim represents more than just environmental conservation – it's an effort to revive a fading tradition while nurturing tomorrow's environmental stewards.

Organised by social worker Warren Alemao in collaboration with entrepreneur Hansel Vaz of Cazulo Premium Feni and environmentalist Roque Fernandes, the drive distributed 350 cashew saplings to young participants, many of which were planted during the camp. Twenty coaching staff and ten volunteers also joined the effort.



The project is part of a larger restoration initiative involving the planting of 2,000 saplings across local villages – a move organisers describe as a way to reconnect young Goans with their agricultural heritage while addressing environmental concerns.

"The environment is very important. You are the future of our state, and it all depends on how we conserve and protect it," Ale-

mao told the children during the planting. He emphasised that the aim was to bind every child to Goa's soil through direct participation in conservation.

Hansel Vaz, whose own son took part in the summer football camp, said the project holds personal significance rooted in childhood memories and cultural preservation. "There's a saying in Konkani, Bim toxem bhat

– as we sow, so we reap," Vaz explained. "Our children are like little plants – we feed them, water them, nourish them, protect them. We hope they grow deep roots and strong branches." He linked the initiative to wider concerns about the decline of traditional agriculture in Goa. "For 400 years, Goa has celebrated the cashew. But somewhere along the line, we stopped planting them. This is us today, planting our future," he said.

Vaz stressed that the effort goes far beyond the football camp, outlining plans for village-wide plantations. "We've got 2,000 saplings and several local villages where we're planting. Not just trees – we're planting heritage," he added.

Dr Wenona Fernandes e Vaz, Hansel's wife, offered a maternal perspective, highlighting the initiative's intergenerational value. "No summer is complete without

mangoes, jackfruits or cashews. As a mother of two, I hope to see my children continue swinging on cashew trees – because this isn't just about farming," she said.

Her husband expanded on the cultural significance of the effort. "This is about the story of the land and the people – and what we want to pass down to the next generation. And we're doing it one sapling at a time," Vaz said. The decision to combine environmental education with sports activities reflects a strategic approach to engage children during their leisure time. Organisers hope the experience will create lasting associations between recreation and environmental responsibility.

The focus on cashew trees addresses both ecological and economic concerns, as they provide shade, improve air quality, and can support local livelihoods through fruit and nut production.