

Ryots despair as leak sullies Margao fields with sewage

Locals allege sewage chambers and pipes near Hospicio were damaged during excavation work by Power Dept; worry about contamination of drinking water

Team Herald

MARGAO: A sewage leak near the South Goa District Hospital has raised alarm among farmers and residents of the Danvoddem-Fatorda area, with fears mounting over agricultural fields' damage and potential health hazards due to possible contamination of drinking water. The leak, reportedly caused by damage to sewage chambers and pipelines during recent excavation work undertaken by the Electricity Department, has resulted in untreated sewage spilling into agricultural fields. With paddy cultivation set to begin soon, the situation has triggered serious concern in the

“Farmers are afraid to even step into their fields due to the accumulated sewage and filth. Many times, we have noticed that the water pipeline near the same sewage chamber is also damaged. There is a high possibility that sewage may get mixed with the water supply and reach households
— Zico Fernandes, local resident

farming community. Zico Fernandes, a local resident of Danvoddem, highlighted the severity of the issue. “The flow of raw sewage into the fields will not only hamper agricultural activities but also pose a serious health hazard. Presently, farmers are afraid to even step into their fields due to the accumulated sewage and filth,” he said. He warned of a greater risk to public health. “Many

times, we have noticed that the water pipeline near the same sewage chamber is also damaged. There is a high possibility that sewage may get mixed with the water supply and reach households. This is extremely dangerous,” Fernandes added. Fatorda MLA Vijai Sardesai had earlier expressed concern over the issue, urging authorities to act swiftly. However, residents say that despite his

intervention, no concrete steps have been taken to resolve the problem on the ground. “The foul smell, the contamination of fields, and the health risk — all of this is completely unacceptable. We need immediate action, not just promises,” said another local farmer. With the monsoon approaching, residents and farmers are demanding urgent repairs to both sewage and water pipelines, proper decontamination of the affected area, and preventive measures to avoid future leaks. As the farming season nears, the community remains on edge, hoping authorities will step in before the situation escalates into a full-blown public health crisis.

FDA raids & shutters filthy, unlicensed food businesses

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a bid to uphold food safety standards, the Goa Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) conducted a rigorous inspection drive across Salcete Taluka recently. The operation, led by Designated Officer Sanjyot Kulkarni (South Goa) along with Food Safety Officers Madhav Kavlekar and Pradiksha Chopdekar, targeted multiple food businesses following complaints and routine checks. The inspections revealed alarming violations, prompting immediate regulatory action. Among the establishments inspected was a bakery unit in Nuvem, where pao (bread) was being prepared under extremely unhygienic conditions. The unit was found operating without a valid licence. Similarly, two restaurants in Loutolim were shut down for functioning in unsanitary conditions and lacking proper licencing. A catering unit also came under scrutiny,



with inspectors noting multiple deficiencies, including a leaking soak pit, damaged flooring, unpainted walls, exposed food items, broken tiles, and unlabeled food products. Further inspections exposed a retail outlet illegally selling homemade snacks prepared in an un-

licensed residential kitchen. Another catering unit was found conducting food operations on an open rooftop, raising serious hygiene concerns. Inspection reports were issued to all offending Food Business Operators (FBOs), directing them to comply with safety regulations or face penalties. Health Minister Vishwajit Rane emphasised the government's commitment to safeguarding public health, stating that such drives would continue across Goa to ensure adherence to food safety norms. Authorities have urged citizens to report violations, reinforcing the 'Mission Healthy Goa' FDA initiative for a safer dining environment.

'Delayed promise': Locals on Margao Medical College at ESI hospital

Team Herald

MARGAO: The announcement by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant that the ESI Hospital in Margao will be developed into a Government Medical College has drawn a mixed response from local stakeholders. While the decision has been broadly welcomed, citizens' group Madganvcho Awaaz reminded the government that this was a commitment dating back to 2009. “This is not a new promise—it's a delayed one,” said Madganvcho Awaaz youth leader Prabhav Naik. “The people of Margao have waited far too long. We will ensure it doesn't become yet another symbolic or underutilised project.” The CM's announcement was followed by a visit from Bicholim MLA, Dr Chandrakant Shetye, who reviewed the current state of the ESI Hospital. Naik appreciated the visit and Shetye's candid assessment that the hospital is operating at only 25% of its capacity. According to Madganvcho Awaaz, the activation of the hospital's services must include the deployment of qualified staff, proper infrastructure upgrades, and full-scale healthcare services for the public.

Goan commuters want taxi apps too, says tourism trade body

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Travel and Tourism Association of Goa (TTAG) has welcomed the State's draft Transport Aggregator Guidelines 2025, stating that regulated app-based taxi services are not just a tourist requirement but a public utility that many Goans also want. The association has launched an online petition open to all citizens, which it plans to submit to the government next week as part of the ongoing public consultation process. “This isn't just about tourist taxis anymore,” said TTAG President Jack Sukhija, while speaking to **O Herald**. “Goa has the highest per capita vehicle ownership in the country, and our internal roads cannot cope with the traffic. There's nearly one death a day due to road accidents. If taxis are conveniently available, people—especially for short distances—will use them.” He said the early response to the petition shows that many Goans, not just tourists or industry stakeholders, want app-based taxis to become a reliable transport option in the state. TTAG North Goa Vice-President Aakash Madgavkar, who is coordinating the petition, said the survey will remain open through the week to allow more people to participate. “This survey is to provide every citizen an opportunity to give their honest feedback on app-based taxi services in Goa,” he said. “We plan to submit the petition to

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— Akash Madgavkar, TTAG vice president, N Goa

the government between June 10 and 15.” The draft guidelines, notified on May 20, propose to regulate app-based taxi aggregators in Goa. Public suggestions or objections to the policy can be submitted until June 19.

TTAG welcomes draft Transport Aggregator Guidelines; creates online petition for the public, to be submitted to the government after a week

Madgavkar said the guidelines have the potential to benefit all stakeholders—drivers, residents, and tourists—by offering fair pricing, broader availability, and reduced road congestion. “If implemented well, tourists may stop bringing or hiring vehicles, and locals will also feel confident using taxis more regularly,” he said. He also pointed out that the guidelines are not compulsory for drivers, and allow them to opt in—or even develop their own

apps to grow their business through technology. Responding to criticism against TTAG from opposition political parties that have backed taxi unions opposing the draft, Madgavkar said, “Political parties should not unnecessarily use these guidelines to divide people. Technology is being adopted in every sector, and we need to allow that to happen in transport too.” Sukhija added that while fares in tourist destinations are often higher than in metro cities, the current notified rates—though on the higher side—offer a fair balance. “They ensure drivers are adequately compensated while giving consumers the transparency and convenience they expect,” he said. TTAG believes that structured, app-based taxi services can address long-standing issues of availability, pricing, and reliability, while also improving safety and reducing the state's over-dependence on private vehicles.

Collector orders weekly hearings to clear backlog of revenue cases

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a bid to expedite the disposal of long-pending revenue cases, South Goa District Collector Egna Cleetus, has directed all Revenue Commissioners and Deputy Collectors in the district to hold special hearings every Monday morning. These sessions will focus exclusively on revenue cases that have been pending for more than five years. The directive comes after a review by the district administration revealed a significant backlog of such cases before various Revenue Courts in South Goa. The Collector emphasised the urgent need to re-

The order specifies that if any party involved in a case — including lawyers or authorised representatives — is unable to attend a Monday morning hearing, they must be offered an alternative date at their convenience

solve these matters in accordance with legal procedures and has set a three-month target to clear the backlog. According to the order, each office is required to prepare a weekly list of cases that have been pending for five years or more. These cases are to be prioritised for hearing during the special Monday sessions. Once the pending matters are dealt with, regular cases may also be taken up for hearing. To ensure fairness and accessibility, the order specifies that if any party involved in a case — including lawyers or authorised representatives — is unable to attend a Monday morning hearing, they must be offered an alternative date at their convenience. All concerned officers have been instructed to submit a monthly report detailing the hearings conducted and progress made. These reports will be reviewed by the South Goa District Collectorate to monitor compliance and effectiveness. Additional District

Collectors have been assigned the responsibility of overseeing the implementation of the directive. They will ensure that hearings are conducted diligently and that cases are disposed of strictly within the framework of the law. “The objective is to ensure timely justice and prevent unnecessary delays in revenue matters,” said the order, highlighting the administration's commitment to improving judicial efficiency in the district. This initiative is expected to significantly reduce the long-pending burden on Revenue Courts and enhance the overall functioning of the revenue administration in South Goa.

Alert villagers thwart development work on converted orchard, paddy field in Curtorim

Team Herald

MARGAO: Tensions flared in the village of Panchbhat, Curtorim, on Wednesday as residents halted large-scale land development works being carried out on a property spanning over 100,000 square metres. The disputed land, bearing Survey Nos. 449/0, 451, and 452 falls under the jurisdiction of the Curtorim Panchayat. According to locals, the sub-division and plotting of the land were being carried out without the mandatory

permissions from local authorities. The site came under scrutiny when villagers, led by former Zilla Panchayat member and Curtorim Congress leader Moreno Rebelo, intervened and demanded that the work be stopped immediately. Police officials arrived on the scene but reportedly expressed helplessness in taking immediate action. It was only after significant pressure from the gathered locals that the Flying Squad and Forest Department were summoned to inspect the site. Following their arrival, all

ongoing work on the property was halted. Later, addressing the media along with the villagers, Moreno Rebelo stated that the project would not be allowed to proceed under any circumstances. He raised concerns over the legality and environmental impact of the development. “This land was originally classified as Non-Development Slope (NDS), paddy field, and orchard. It has been converted to a settlement zone, which poses a serious ecological threat to Curtorim,” Rebelo said.

The villagers have demanded a full investigation into the land conversion and development permissions. They argue that unchecked urbanisation will damage the local environment and violate the traditional land use practices of the area. The incident has brought to light growing concerns over illegal land conversions and unregulated development in South Goa's rural pockets, with locals vowing to resist any move that threatens the ecological balance and heritage of their village.

Fisheries officials inspect illegally docked boats in Rachol, flag open defecation

Team Herald

MARGAO: A joint inspection was carried out by officials from the fisheries department and Rachol panchayat following a complaint lodged by the panchayat regarding the illegal parking of fishing vessels and the conduct of migrant labourers in Ilha de Rachol. Rachol Sarpanch Joseph Vaz, who accompanied the team, stated that labourers working aboard these vessels openly admitted to defecating in the open and using the trawlers as makeshift shelters. He said the situation



was unacceptable to the residents of Rachol, who are demanding immediate intervention and compensation for damages allegedly caused to local fishermen and the panchayat.

The issue had earlier prompted the panchayat to approach the Goa Coastal Zone Management Authority (GCZMA), with Vaz leading a delegation to submit a memoran-

dum. The panchayat alleged that trawler and boat owners were illegally parking their vessels near the chapel and football ground, in clear violation of CRZ norms.

The memorandum claimed that this activity had damaged the protective wall built by the panchayat and was obstructing the movement of local fishing vessels. It further warned of serious health hazards caused by unsanitary conditions, stating that labourers defecating on the bundh could potentially spread diseases like dengue to the villagers. Urging GCZMA to ensure relocation of the vessels to designated spots, the panchayat also sought proper sanitation and health checks for the migrant labourers to safeguard public health in the village. He criticised the state government for facilitating mass land sales and conversions through controversial legislation, alleging these laws quietly dispossess locals and ignore ecological concerns. On the contentious issue of app-based taxi aggregators, Fernandes condemned the draft guidelines, saying they were introduced without consulting local taxi operators. He accused the Transport and Tourism departments of ignoring stakeholders and supported the opposition voiced by Goan taxi owners, warning the move threatened the livelihoods of thousands. Outlining his parliamentary contributions, Fernandes said he had raised issues including

the demand for ST reservations in the Goa Assembly, coal pollution, Mhadei river diversion, double-tracking, and threats to Goa's natural heritage. He also called for implementation of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment on Panchayati Raj, UNESCO status for tiatr, and opposed demolition of religious structures like the Dev Khapreshwar temple. He used Zero Hour and Rule 377 to raise concerns such as coastal erosion, gold smuggling, exclusion of villages from eco-sensitive zones, delays in the elevated highway, satellite spectrum issues, and irregularities in the Indian Maritime University entrance exams. As a member of the Parliamentary Defence Committee, Fernandes said he had supported initiatives for armed forces modernisation and readiness. MPLAD funds were utilised for a new fishing jetty in Vasco da Gama and restoration of water bodies under the Mission Amrit Sarovar scheme. He also took up the continuation

of operations at Dabolim Airport, protection of homes and temples in Bhoma, and equitable employment for Goans in the postal department. He opposed dredging of rivers and destructive fishing practices like bull trawling and LED fishing. Criticising the government's failure to provide essential medical equipment and address staffing shortages, Fernandes said patients continue to suffer due to neglected healthcare infrastructure.

‘We will resist’: Viriato warns outsiders buying land in Goa

S Goa MP completes a year in office; slams state govt over land conversions, draft taxi guidelines, lapses in public healthcare

Team Herald

MARGAO: Marking one year since his election, South Goa MP Viriato Fernandes held a press conference in Margao on Wednesday with South Goa Congress district and block heads, presenting a report card of his performance and reaffirming his commitment to protecting Goa's land, identity, and people's rights. Warning that outsiders purchasing large parcels of land in the state were taking a “huge risk”, Fernandes said Congress would resist any illegal construction, citing the Bhutani real estate project in Sancoale, which the party strongly opposed, as an example of its consistent stance against large-scale developments threatening Goan communities. He criticised the state government for facilitating mass land sales and conversions through controversial legislation, alleging these laws quietly dispossess locals and ignore ecological concerns. On the contentious issue of app-based taxi aggregators, Fernandes condemned the draft guidelines, saying they were introduced without consulting local taxi operators. He accused the Transport and Tourism departments of ignoring stakeholders and supported the opposition voiced by Goan taxi owners, warning the move threatened the livelihoods of thousands. Outlining his parliamentary contributions, Fernandes said he had raised issues including

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MAX. TEMP	32 °C
MIN. TEMP	25.4 °C



Honey, that's enough for the
airfare. This is for the taxi