

Cracks in governance: Govt buildings in Margao pose public safety threat

Neglected heritage structures and staff quarters deteriorating; locals demand action

Team Herald

MARGAO: While much attention has been focused on the crumbling condition of private buildings in Margao, what's equally concerning is the poor state of several government-owned structures, many of which now pose a serious threat to public safety.

From iconic heritage buildings to residential quarters meant for government employees, the danger is widespread.

Key among the affected structures are the historic Communidade building near Hospicio, Kamra de Salcete, the old Margao Municipal Council building, and several blocks at the Junta Quarters located across various parts of Margao and Fatorda.

These buildings have suffered years of neglect and



poor maintenance, leading to visible structural damage and growing fears of collapse.

The Junta Quarters, which were originally built to house government staff, are now showing clear signs of wear, with cracked walls, leaking roofs, and damaged staircases. Residents and neighbours say these buildings are no longer fit for occupancy and should be urgently repaired or vacated.

Former Margao Municipal Council (MMC) chair-

person Savio Coutinho expressed his dismay at the authorities' inaction. "What about the Communidade and the old Municipal Council building? It took three years just to complete the repair work on a portion of the Urban Health Centre building," he said, adding that the same apathy is visible across other government properties.

The Communidade building, once central to local administration, is now visibly crumbling. Kamra de Salcete,

too, is deteriorating, and the old Municipal Council building remains untouched despite repeated public warnings. The unsafe conditions at the Junta Quarters add to the list of neglected government assets that are potentially hazardous.

Residents stress that this is not merely a heritage or infrastructure issue but a public safety emergency. "We expect government buildings to be better maintained than private ones, but that's clearly not the case here," said a Fatorda resident living near one of the Junta Quarters blocks.

With the monsoon already setting in, locals fear the risk of structural failure is increasing by the day. Despite growing pressure, the Goa government has yet to announce any specific plans to restore, secure, or replace these endangered buildings.

PORTION OF BUILDING COLLAPSES NEAR CINE LATA

MARGAO: Another section of the dilapidated Holy Family building near Cine Lata in Margao collapsed

on Tuesday night, reigniting fears over the safety of ageing and neglected structures in the town. This incident occurred less than a month after part of the building's gallery had already given way.

The fresh collapse has once again drawn attention to the precarious condition of old buildings in Margao, with residents raising concerns over public safety. The latest incident adds

to a growing list of similar structural failures reported in recent weeks.

Responding to these dangers, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant stated last week that 10 to 12 unsafe buildings in Margao have been identified for demolition. Of these, two to three have been earmarked for immediate action.

Local residents have now renewed their calls for urgent intervention from the authorities. "Before more buildings give way, something must be done," one resident said, voicing the community's growing anxiety.



River Sal's mangrove spread poses dangers for fishing, health and pollution



Team Herald

MARGAO: The unchecked overgrowth of mangroves along the River Sal is causing serious concern among local residents, as it disrupts traditional fishing activities, threatens public health, and contributes to environmental degradation.

This has severely hindered the movement of traditional canoes, impacting the livelihoods of fishermen who depend on the river

— Cruz Silva, Velim MLA

In a formal appeal to the Forest and Environment Departments, Velim MLA Cruz Silva highlighted that the dense mangrove vegetation—stretching from Colleawaddo near the Cavelossim-Assolna bridge to Ambelim Soccobanda—has drastically narrowed the navigable width of the river. "This has severely hindered the movement of traditional canoes, impacting the livelihoods of fishermen who depend on the river," said Silva.

While the ecological value of mangroves is acknowledged, residents stressed the need for balanced management. The thick foliage, they say, has become a breeding ground for mosquitoes and a magnet for floating plastic and solid waste, further pollut-

CAUSE OF CONCERN

- Dense mangrove growth has led to increased mosquito breeding and accumulation of plastic waste, posing serious health risks to riverside residents.
- Rising bat populations in mangrove zones are damaging nearby coconut plantations, threatening local livelihoods and the agrarian economy.
- Locals demand immediate government inspection and regulation of mangrove spread to prevent long-term environmental and community damage.

ing the river and creating health risks for riverside communities.

Another growing concern is the rise in bat populations within the mangrove zones, which are damaging nearby coconut plantations and affecting the agrarian economy.

Locals are now urging the government to conduct an on-site inspection and take immediate steps to regulate the mangrove spread while preserving ecological integrity. They warn that without prompt intervention, the situation could lead to long-term damage to both the environment and the communities reliant on the river.

Green tribunal to decide fate of Borim bridge on July 21

Notes completion of all counter affidavits; Loutolim farmers pin hopes on judiciary

Team Herald

MARGAO: The National Green Tribunal's (NGT) Western Zone Bench in Pune has adjourned the ongoing Borim bridge case to July 21 after noting that all pleadings have finally been completed. The bench, comprising Justice Pushpa Sathyanarayana and Expert Member Dr Vijay Kulkarni, observed that respondents (government authorities) have now filed their respective replies and counter affidavits, marking an end to the long delay in filing these affidavits.

Albert Pinheiro, Chairman of the Loutolim Tenants As-

sociation, expressed confidence following this development, stating that the completion of all replies and counter affidavits has made the matter clear for adjudication. "We are optimistic that the order will be in our favour," Pinheiro said, emphasizing that agricultural activities continue uninterrupted with sowing expected to complete within the next 15 days. He expressed unwavering faith in the judiciary and assured that farmers would offer prayers for divine blessings, confident that their khazan lands will survive the legal challenge.

This development comes against the backdrop of the

NGT's earlier displeasure with government agencies, where the tribunal imposed a Rs 5,000 fine on the Union Environment Ministry for delays and non-compliance. In that April 2025 order, the NGT had expressed frustration over the Ministry's failure to provide crucial information about environmental clearance requirements for the bridge project, which farmers argued would damage vital khazan fields. The tribunal had also criticized the Public Works Department (PWD) for withholding project details and demanded explanations for the delays.

PRESERVING THE SACRED BONDS



Women gather in Nachinola to celebrate Vat Poonima, performing sacred rituals with devotion in a vibrant display of tradition and faith. The festival, honouring marital fidelity and the long life of husbands, fills the community with a serene yet festive spirit

Creek behind Margao KTC bus stand turns into dumping ground

Team Herald

MARGAO: A water creek located behind the Margao KTC bus stand has turned into an unofficial dumping ground, with plastic bags, bottles, and other waste piling up for months—raising serious environmental and public health concerns.

Despite repeated complaints from locals, no significant action has been taken by the concerned authorities to address the worsening situation. The unchecked dumping has resulted in severe water logging, particularly during rains, creating hazardous conditions for nearby resi-

The creek has become a breeding ground for mosquitoes and a threat to our health. Every time it rains, the area gets flooded and the stench is unbearable

— Milagres Fernandes, Local resident

dents and pedestrians. "The creek has become a breeding ground for mosquitoes and a threat to our health. Every time it rains, the area gets flooded and the stench is unbearable," said Milagres Fernandes, a local resident. "We've raised this issue multiple times, but it feels like no

The soil is toxic now, and the stagnant water is a perfect recipe for vector-borne diseases

— Cedric Pereira, Environmentalist

one is listening." Environmental experts warn that the prolonged exposure of the soil to pollutants has led to heavy contamination, making ecological restoration an urgent necessity. "The soil is toxic now, and the stagnant water is a perfect recipe for vector-borne

diseases," said Cedric Pereira, an environmental activist. "This is not just a local issue—it's an environmental crisis that needs immediate intervention."

Residents are calling on the Margao Municipal Council and the Goa State Pollution Control Board to take immediate steps to clear the creek, treat the contaminated soil, and introduce sustainable waste management measures to prevent future pollution.

Locals also emphasize the need for regular monitoring and stricter enforcement to ensure that the creek does not revert to being a dumping ground.

FDA orders closure of Khareband eatery for unhygienic conditions

Team Herald

MARGAO: Health officials from the Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) ordered the closure of an eatery in Khareband after finding it operating in violation of safety and hygiene norms.

The action was part of the FDA's ongoing efforts to ensure food establishments adhere to basic health regulations. The inspection team, led by officer Sanjayot Kudalkar, also conducted checks on food stalls set up for the Old Market feast fair, paying special attention to hygiene standards and the quality of food handling.

At the Khareband outlet, the FDA team found multiple serious violations. "The premises were extremely unhygienic," Kudalkar told reporters after the raid. "There was no clarity on the source of the water being

used and wastewater was being discharged directly into the open."

According to the FDA officer, the staff employed at the eatery did not possess valid health cards and were working without protective gear such as head covers. In view of these lapses, the department deemed the premises unfit for operation and issued directions for its immediate closure.

Authorities said the outlet owner was reportedly out of town at the time of the inspection. The eatery has been instructed to rectify the deficiencies before any consideration for reopening.

The FDA has intensified its checks across the state, particularly at seasonal fairs and tourist-centric food stalls, to prevent any public health risks from poorly maintained food outlets.

LEGAL METROLOGY DEPARTMENT RAIDS E-COMMERCE GODOWNS

MARGAO: The Legal Metrology Department conducted raids at godowns of two e-commerce companies, one located in Benaulim and another in Aquem, uncovering multiple packaging and labeling violations. Officials found that numerous products failed to meet mandatory compliance requirements under consumer protection regulations. During the inspections, enforcement teams identified several critical deficiencies including the absence of complete head office addresses where consumers could send return goods and lodge complaints. Many products also lacked essential manufacturer details and proper contact information, making it difficult for customers to trace product origins when needed.

Goan student's 'Smart Dustbin' innovation takes him to Japan

Student from Ambaulim GHSS in group of 54 selected from over 7 lakh entries for international science programme

Team Herald

MARGAO: In an era where environmental consciousness meets technological innovation, a young student from Goa has demonstrated that meaningful contributions to society can emerge from careful observation of everyday problems. Farhaan Shaikh, a student at Ambaulim Government Higher Secondary School, has secured his place among an elite group of 54 students nationwide who will represent India in Japan this month through the prestigious Inspire-Manak program.

The journey began with a simple yet profound observation. While others might have overlooked it, Shaikh noticed how cattle inadvertently consumed plastic

waste mixed with organic matter, leading to digestive complications and sometimes fatal outcomes. This everyday tragedy sparked an idea that would eventually catch the attention of national evaluators.

"The problem that cattle would eat plastic waste and face digestion issues, even death, really bothered me," Shaikh explained. "I realized that people mix all waste together without proper segregation, which creates problems not just for animals but also for the workers who must sort through everything later."

His solution took the form of an innovative 'Smart Dustbin' – a prototype that employs colour-coded systems integrated with sensor technology to guide users through proper waste



segregation. The device represents a blend of practical engineering and environmental awareness that addresses multiple stakeholders in the waste management ecosystem.

The recognition came through the Inspire-Manak

initiative, a flagship program implemented by the Department of Science and Technology that nurtures innovation among school students. This year's competition saw over seven lakh entries from across the country, making Shaikh's

selection particularly noteworthy.

From June 15 to 21, Shaikh will immerse himself in Japan's scientific landscape through the Sakura Science High School Program, visiting leading universities and research institutions.

The itinerary includes lectures by Nobel laureates and extensive exposure to the country's scientific and cultural ecosystem.

"I'm really excited to see how Japanese people live and understand their technology," Shaikh shared. "I want to learn about their scientific developments and understand why they're progressing so much in various fields. I believe this will be a tremendous learning experience."

The recognition extends beyond personal achievement. At a felicitation ceremony organized by the Cuncolim Industries Association, Shaikh's mentor and science teacher, Priya Travasso, described him as "a curious and inquisitive student always interested in science and understand-

ing scientific concepts."

His headmistress, Jyoti Desai, expressed particular pride in seeing a government school student achieve such recognition. "It fills me with immense pride, and the credit goes to his parents, the school, the directorate, and the education minister," she noted.

Currently, Shaikh is working to expand his concept beyond the prototype stage. His vision includes developing a comprehensive system capable of automatically sorting various categories of waste upon disposal – an ambitious goal that could have significant implications for urban waste management.

Abhishek Pravimal, the Managing Director (MD) of Goa Industries Development Corporation (GIDC),

commended Shaikh's practical approach to learning. "I can see the enthusiasm to practically apply what is learned in science textbooks to real-world problems," he observed. "Going to Japan, he will encounter different mindsets and approaches to problem-solving."

The INSPIRE-MANAK (Million Minds Augmenting National Aspirations and Knowledge) Scheme, executed by DST with National Innovation Foundation – India, is designed to foster creativity and innovation among students in classes 6 to 10. Japan's Sakura Science Exchange Program, which has invited nearly 33,200 researchers and students in its first six years, reflects the country's commitment to international scientific collaboration.