

Margao runs out of textbooks, parents and students distressed

Schools refuse to allow students to use second-hand textbooks with minor markings; Edu Board claims they can supply, urges students to use digital books online

Team Herald

MARGAO: As the academic year moves ahead in full swing, a significant shortage of textbooks across several classes has been reported in Margao, causing considerable hardship to students and parents alike. Despite assurances from the Goa Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education that there is no scarcity, ground realities suggest otherwise.

Students from classes 9 to 12 are reportedly struggling to access textbooks for core subjects, including Science for Class 9, Psychology for Class 11, and English, Hindi, and Konkani for Classes 9 and 10. Additionally, textbooks for Portugal and France for standards 9 to 12 are said to be in short supply.

Parents have expressed frustration over the situation, especially as several higher secondary schools are allegedly refusing to allow students to use second-hand textbooks—even those with minor

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markings or answers—insisting on new copies only.

“It has been tough to move ahead with the portion as there is no availability of the required textbooks, said Jyoti Naik, a concerned parent. “My daughter needs the Class 11 Psychology book, and we’ve searched everywhere.”

Another parent, Andrew Fernandes, added, “The Board says books are available online, but not every student has a tablet or constant access to the internet. What are students supposed to do until then—miss lessons?”

In response to the rising complaints, Bhagirath Shetye, Chairman of the Goa Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education, denied any widespread shortage.

“I have checked with the records and it has been noticed that the claims are totally false. Except for a minimal shortage of the 9th standard science textbook, there is required stock of all other textbooks,” Shetye stated.

“We can supply the textbooks if anyone provides us with the requirements in the area.”

He also emphasised that digital

versions of the books are available on the Diksha portal, urging students and schools to make use of the platform.

However, a visit by **O Herald** to several bookstores in Margao revealed a different reality. One bookstore owner, who did not wish to be named, confirmed that the Class 11 Psychology textbook is completely out of stock, with no clear timeline for when it will be replenished.

“We’ve been receiving requests every day, but we haven’t received new stock in weeks,” the store owner said. “We have been told that class 11 psychology textbook will not print more copies.”

The ongoing mismatch between official statements and ground reports has led to confusion and concern among the student community. As pressure builds, stakeholders are urging the education authorities to urgently address the issue and allow flexibility in using older textbooks so that no student is left behind.

Ravindra Bhavan closure: Tiatrists demand compensation

Team Herald

MARGAO: The closure of the Pai Tiatr auditorium at Ravindra Bhavan, Margao, following a false ceiling collapse has triggered anger and disappointment within the tiatr fraternity.

Several directors and performers, whose monsoon season shows have been affected, are now calling for government compensation.

On Thursday, Ravindra Bhavan Chairperson Rajendra Talak held a meeting with tiatr directors to explain the situation. He cited the recent incident involving the ceiling collapse as the reason for the temporary closure of the auditorium.

Talak assured the fraternity that he would urge the Public Works Department (PWD) to take up the repair work on a war footing so that the venue could be restored as soon as possible.

Despite the assurance, tiatrists raised concerns over the structural stability and long-term safety of the auditorium. Many expressed

Directors have shifted their performances to Gomant Vidya Niketan (GVN), but due to its limited seating, they are struggling financially. Ticket prices at GVN have been planned to increase from Rs 200 to Rs 250 to help offset the losses

frustration over the lack of proper infrastructure to support cultural performances in Goa.

Anthony Barbosa, President of the Tiatr Academy of Goa (TAG), who also attended the meeting, took serious note of the artists’ concerns.

He promised to take the matter to Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and the Minister of Art and Culture, seeking compensation for the affected tiatr directors.

“The incident at Ravindra Bhavan is a disaster for our tiatr community,” Barbosa said. “Many directors have invested heavily in new productions for the

monsoon season, and now they’re facing heavy losses. Compensation from the government is necessary and justified.”

Speaking to reporters, tiatr director Sammy Tavares stated that the closure had severely disrupted scheduled performances. “With no proper auditorium to stage our shows, we are incurring losses. We appreciate the Tiatr Academy’s willingness to take up the issue with the government,” he said.

Musician Norman Cardozo shared similar concerns, noting that several directors were ready with new productions but are now unable to perform. “It’s high time the government and tiatr lovers extend their support,” he urged.

Currently, many tiatrists have shifted their performances to Gomant Vidya Niketan (GVN), but due to its limited seating, they are struggling financially. Ticket prices at GVN have been planned to increase from Rs 200 to Rs 250 to help offset the losses.

Young firefighters live in squalour at Margao’s rundown barracks

Wet, moldy walls, wiring on the fritz, leaky bathrooms, mosquitoes and rodents: Emergency workers report inhumane conditions

Team Herald

MARGAO: The living conditions at the Margao Fire Brigade barracks have reached a critical low, raising alarm over the welfare of Goa’s emergency responders. Young fire personnel, many of whom are on active duty responding to life-threatening emergencies, are being forced to reside in what some describe as “inhumane and neglected” accommodations.

The barracks, meant to serve as a functional and safe residence for fire fighters, have reportedly fallen into severe disrepair. Sources say the infrastructure is crumbling, sanitation facilities are inadequate, and basic amenities like clean water, ventilation, and pest control are either in-

sufficient or entirely absent.

“These conditions are not fit for anyone to live in, let alone those tasked with saving lives,” said one fire fighter on the condition of anonymity. “We respond to emergencies round the clock, but when we return, there’s no rest—just more hardship.”

Photographs and eyewitness accounts depict overcrowded rooms with leaking ceilings, unhygienic toilets, and lack of maintenance—more akin to an abandoned shelter than a state-run facility. Sources reveal that the structure suffers from severe leakage, with parts of the ceiling crumbling and falling close to sleeping staff. The situation is even worse on the top floor, where urine-contaminated water from broken drainage systems seeps down to the lower levels.

Basic necessities are missing. The kitchen lacks ceiling fans, making meal preparation intolerable in the heat. Ongoing water seepage often leaves beds and clothes soaked, forcing fire personnel to search for dry cor-



Interior view of a fire station barracks showing cluttered rooms and poor maintenance.

ners just to sleep. Most worryingly, the building’s electrical system is reportedly faulty. Frequent short circuits have turned the barracks into a potential fire hazard—even for those trained to fight fires.

Public safety advocates and local residents have expressed shock over the state of the facility and are calling on the government to take immediate corrective action. “This is a basic issue of human dignity,” said Rohan Naik, resident of Margao. “If our emergency responders are not cared for, how can we expect them to care for the public in times of crisis?”

Calls are growing for the Directorate of Fire and Emergency Services and local authorities to initiate urgent repairs, improve facilities, and ensure that fire personnel have access to proper living conditions.

Vehicles parked on roadside for over 8 days will be towed: CM

Team Herald

MARGAO: Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has announced a strict directive against long-term roadside parking and unauthorised roadside garages, stating that vehicles found parked for more than eight days along widened roads will be issued notices and subsequently moved to the government scrapyard.

Vehicle owners will not be permitted to make claims once the vehicles are removed, he warned.

Speaking on the sidelines of the inauguration of the Traffic Cell at Fatorda, the CM stressed the need for traffic discipline and adherence to traffic rules, citing an alarming rise in pedestrian deaths due to negligence on the roads.

“There is an increase in vehicles, but traffic rules are not followed properly. Pedestrian deaths are rising, and this is not acceptable. To prevent further tragedies, we must enforce traffic discipline,” the CM stated.

He also reassured the public that the government is working hard to improve public transport and intends to leverage technology to curb traffic violations more effectively.

Vijai flags filthy, mucky wholesale fish market, pushes for cleaning agency

Team Herald

MARGAO: Concerns have once again been raised over the unhygienic conditions at the wholesale fish market in Margao, managed by the South Goa Planning and Development Authority (SGPDA). The market, which caters to a large section of South Goa’s population as well as the hospitality industry, has reportedly deteriorated fur-



Photograph of a filthy and cluttered wholesale fish market.

ther during the monsoon. Complaints have emerged about the worsening situation during the rains, with critics questioning why the issue continues to persist despite

repeated assurances from the SGPDA that it would be addressed.

Responding to media queries on the matter, Fatorda MLA Vijai Sardesai said he would write to the Chief Minister, urging that a cleaning service agency be appointed to ensure regular maintenance of the market premises. He alleged that the SGPDA seems more focused on collecting fees—using bouncer-like personnel for the task—than on addressing hygiene concerns. He stressed that deploying a proper cleaning agency is essential.

Sardesai added that since the SGPDA is in the process of tendering the work related to both maintenance and revenue collection at the market, it is important that the clause for cleaning services is specifically included in the tender.

He also noted that the Chief Minister has agreed to his earlier request to repaint the soon-to-be-inaugurated section of the wholesale fish market, stating that the previous design lacked authenticity, while the new artwork will better represent the local fishing community.

Mangroves under siege: New blueprint warns of alarming threats to coastal ecosystems

Mgmt plan highlights risks from pollution, encroachment and climate impacts while calling for urgent restoration

Team Herald

MARGAO: Goa’s vital coastal mangrove belts, essential to the state’s ecological and economic stability, are increasingly under threat from human encroachment, environmental degradation, and climate change, according to a new management plan by the Department of Environment and Climate Change. The strategy, developed with input from scientists and local stakeholders, outlines steps for mangrove conservation amidst growing threats.

A significant issue highlighted in the report is the discrepancy in mangrove coverage data. The Forest Department lists just 26 square kilometres of mangroves, while a 2016 National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management study recorded over 41 square kilometres, suggesting monitoring gaps and possible losses. The plan calls for updating this data using GIS-based surveys and UAV-assisted LiDAR technology.

The plan covers seven major estuaries, including the Mandovi-Zuari complex, Terekhol, Chapora, Sal, Talpona, and Galgibag. Mangrove loss, it notes, is driven by illegal land reclamation, tree clearing, poor enforcement of laws, and indirect threats such

as water pollution. Mangroves on government land not designated as forest areas are particularly vulnerable. Rising sea levels, storm surges, and altered rainfall patterns further exacerbate the situation.

The management plan emphasizes large-scale restoration of degraded patches, including the propagation of native species, protection from encroachment, and pollution control. It proposes restoring traditional bunds to regulate tidal waters and prevent saline intrusion into adjacent khazan agricultural lands. Invasive mangrove species will be managed through targeted interventions.

A key issue addressed is the conflict between mangrove growth and the protection of khazan lands, once critical to Goa’s agrarian economy but now often colonized by unregulated mangroves. The plan calls for scientific assessments and coordinated restoration efforts.

The strategy also promotes blue carbon projects to attract funding through carbon credit

RECLAIMING GOA'S MANGROVES

CONSERVATION STRATEGY

- Update mapping using GIS and UAV-assisted LiDAR
- Restore degraded areas with native species and nursery propagation
- Rebuild bunds and retaining walls to regulate tidal flow and protect khazan lands
- Manage invasive species disrupting local ecosystems.

COMMUNITY-CENTRIC APPROACH

- Women’s self-help groups to run tours, promote local food, and revive fishing
- Training locals in eco-tourism, nursery ops, and restoration work.
- Carbon financing: Promote blue carbon credits through restoration

WHY IT MATTERS

- Goa’s mangroves are nursery habitat for 180+ fish species, 225+ crustaceans, 185+ bird species
- Protects coasts, filters pollution, and supports artisanal fisheries.
- Basis for sustainable eco-tourism (e.g., MPAs like Chorao Bird Sanctuary)

markets, leveraging mangroves’ ability to sequester carbon. Local communities will be integral to these efforts.

To strengthen legislative protection, the plan proposes a separate law for mangrove protection

on government lands outside forest jurisdiction, with stricter penalties and better enforcement mechanisms. Improved coordination among departments like Forests, Environment, Fisheries, and Agriculture is seen as crucial.

The plan suggests designating new Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), using the Chorao Dr Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary as a model, to safeguard mangrove habitats and support regulated tourism. These MPAs would serve dual purposes: conservation and sustainable livelihoods.

Community involvement is central to the plan, with initiatives like awareness drives, technical training, and eco-tourism. Women’s self-help groups are encouraged to participate in promoting local cuisine, running tours, and reviving traditional fishing techniques.

The economic importance

of mangroves is emphasized throughout, with mangrove belts acting as nurseries for over 180 fish species and supporting Goa’s artisanal fisheries. They also provide essential services like shoreline protection and pollution filtration.

Sustainable tourism is another focus, with the plan proposing non-intrusive eco-tourism activities such as nature trails, birdwatching decks, and non-motorised boat rides. Buffer zones of 50 metres around mangrove areas will regulate construction and human activity. Other measures include biodiversity mapping, citizen science involvement, and research into climate change impacts on mangrove ecosystems. The fisheries sector will benefit from resource management near mangrove areas and water quality monitoring.

The plan, which received approval from a multi-departmental steering committee, has been endorsed by Environment Minister Aleixo Sequeira, who emphasized the need for collaborative and immediate action. The plan advocates regional strategies, with North Goa accounting for nearly 34 square kilometres of mangroves and South Goa just over 7.

Govt begins evacuation, sealing of unsafe buildings

Team Herald

MARGAO: Following a second structural collapse in under a month at Holy Family House near Cine Lata, authorities launched an urgent evacuation and sealing operation on Thursday.

Acting on orders from the South Goa District Disaster Management Authority, chaired by Collector Egna Cleetus, IAS, officials began evicting tenants and sealing access points to the dilapidated two-storey building, which houses several businesses. The Salcete Mamlatdar has been instructed to complete the process within 24 hours. Staircases and entrances are to be sealed to prevent further access.

Margao Police are assisting in the operation, with the Traffic Cell enforcing restrictions around the site, including a parking ban and installation of warning signs and barricades to protect pedestrians.

A detailed report by the Deputy Collector de-

scribes the structure as severely compromised, with visible damage such as falling concrete from balconies and ceilings. It recommends immediate demolition to avert further danger.

Despite recent warnings, several businesses continue to operate from the premises, including in areas affected by the latest collapse. The Collector’s order deems the building unsafe for occupancy and warns that non-compliance will invite legal action under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

All relevant departments, including municipal bodies, have been directed to coordinate and submit a compliance report once the operation concludes. In a public statement, Cleetus said, “The deteriorating state of the building endangers not just tenants but also nearby properties and anyone passing through. This intervention is essential to prevent a potential tragedy.”

