

Govt targets illegal rentals, 500 private vehicles face de-registration

CM Sawant links unauthorised rent-a-cars and rent-a bikes to rising accidents; rental vehicles occupy city parking spaces; operators seek solution to save their livelihoods

Team Herald

MARGAO: Over 500 private vehicles face cancellation of registration for allegedly operating illegally as rent-a-bike and rent-a-car services. In response, local rent-a-bike operators have urged the government to 'resolve' the issue, emphasising that the business provides a source of livelihood for many Goans.

A day earlier, the South Goa Superintendent of Po-

lice (Traffic) informed reporters that more than 500 private vehicles operating as unlicensed rental services will face strict action, including cancellation of their registration.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant also commented on the matter, stating that such illegal rent-a-bike and car services are contributing to the rising number of road accidents in the state.

In Margao, along with several other locations

across Goa, it has also been observed that rent-a-bike operators are occupying general public parking spaces. This practice is depriving citizens of much-needed parking and has become a growing concern for local authorities struggling to manage traffic and urban space.

It's worth noting that rent-a-bike operators in Goa have been vocal in the past about the challenges they face. Their con-

cerns include the need to maintain proper records, ensure passenger safety, and address the proliferation of unauthorised operators using private vehicles for commercial purposes.

"The government is responding by enforcing regulations, which include canceling the licenses of those misusing private vehicles, and mandating that operators maintain records and provide helmets with an ISI

mark," said one operator, who requested anonymity.

He added that while operators are willing to comply with safety advisories and other requirements, the government should also consider the fact that this is a local business that supports hundreds of Goan families.

He urged authorities to take balanced action that safeguards livelihoods while ensuring public safety.

Treated sewage water available free for landscaping, construction

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Sewerage and Infrastructural Development Corporation of Goa Ltd. (SIDCGL) has made treated wastewater from nine Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) across the state available free of charge for non-potable purposes. This initiative applies to the general public, commercial establishments, hotels, resorts, industries, and construction activities. The STPs are located in Calangute-Baga, Patto-Panaji, Sanquelim, Shirvodem-Margao, Katem-Baina-Vasco, Durbhat, Colva, and Kavlem-Ponda.

The treated water meets quality standards prescribed by the Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSCP-CB) and Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) for non-potable use.

Approved applications include agricultural irrigation, urban landscaping such as watering public parks and roadside gardens, industrial processes including cooling systems and equipment washing, and various construction purposes. The government recommends that construction projects within 15 km of operational STPs source at least 50% of their non-potable water needs from this treated supply for activities like concrete curing, dust suppression, and soil compaction.

Interested users must arrange for dedicated tankers that comply with color-coding guidelines specified in government notifications. These tankers cannot be used interchangeably for potable water or sewage transportation. While the treated water is provided without charge, users are responsible for transportation logistics. STPs will provide necessary pumping facilities for loading the water.

Coastal watchdog flags problems in GTDC's 'model shack' plans

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Goa Coastal Zone Management Authority (GCZMA) has raised objections to the Goa Tourism Development Corporation's (GTDC) special purpose vehicle (SPV) proposal for setting up model shacks on four of the state's beaches, citing concerns over the materials to be used and the lack of clarity on sewage disposal arrangements.

GTDC had pitched the shacks, planned for Colva, Benaulum, Arambol, and Calangute, as an innovative project using composite bamboo for temporary beach structures. But after going over the application during their review meeting, the GCZMA pointed

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out that the use of conventional construction materials like mild steel and cement boards contradicted claims of the design being eco-friendly or novel. The agency also noted that no explanation had been offered on how waste generated by the shack, including sewage, would be managed.

In its communication to GTDC, the GCZMA has called for a detailed presentation to clarify how the project meets coastal regulations and how waste will be treated. It emphasized that with-

out a proper waste management system in place, the proposal falls short of environmental standards.

GTDC's plan had sought Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) clearance for 120-square-metre model shacks that it described as being temporary and constructed largely from bamboo. But following an on-site inspection, the GCZMA observed that parts of the proposed shack locations fall within ecologically sensitive zones. Segments of the sites lie in no-devel-

opment areas, within the intertidal zone, and close to sand dunes, all of which are protected under CRZ rules.

Experts from the coastal authority further informed GTDC that any construction must steer clear of both the intertidal stretch and dune systems, and that fencing or any structure that could hinder natural wind flow around sand dunes would not be permitted. Additionally, the tourism body has been informed that even limited use of concrete for structural support will not be allowed.

With the GCZMA seeking multiple clarifications, the fate of the model shack project now hinges on how convincingly the GTDC addresses environmental concerns in its revised plan.

Trader relocates from unsafe bldg after civic pressure

Team Herald

MARGAO: Amid growing concerns over public safety, a shop owner operating from a structurally unsafe building near the Raymond showroom in Margao has finally begun relocating his business.

The move comes after repeated pressure from the Margao Municipal Council (MMC) and public criticism over the continued commercial use of the deteriorating structure.

Over the past few days, locals have observed the business owner gradually shifting operations out of the premises, which had become a focal point of debate over civic accountability and regulatory oversight.

The issue gained widespread attention when the MMC controversially granted a trade license to a Paragon showroom operating from the same unsafe building. Citizens and local activists raised serious objections, question-



ing how the Council could authorize commercial activity in a structure flagged as hazardous. Responding to mounting public outrage, the MMC eventually revoked the trade license, acknowledging the safety risks involved.

However, the matter did not end there. The owner of the building subsequently approached the High Court, arguing that the ground floor had been issued a structural stability certificate, making it legally fit for use.

The case reignited discussions around the criteria and processes involved in declaring buildings safe or unsafe for occupancy,

particularly in densely populated urban areas like Margao.

Sources within the MMC revealed that while the stability certificate for the ground floor may exist, the overall condition of the building remains a cause for concern, especially the upper floors. Authorities have maintained that their primary objective is to ensure public safety and prevent any untoward incidents.

Civic officials are reportedly monitoring the situation closely and are expected to take further action if other occupants of the building do not comply with safety directives.

Margao civic body begins survey to identify, raze illegal structures

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Margao Municipal Council (MMC) has begun a phase-wise survey to identify illegal structures within its jurisdiction, acting on the directives of the High Court. However, concerns about transparency and fairness have been raised by both citizens and a few city councillors.

The survey received official approval during a recent special meeting of the MMC. In its first phase, the focus will be on illegal structures along highways, major roads, and roadsides. The second phase will target unauthorised commercial constructions within

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– Peter Fernandes, *Fatorda local*

the municipal area.

While the initiative is being welcomed in principle, several residents fear that the survey may be carried out selectively. They allege that structures owned by politically connected individuals could be excluded from scrutiny due to undue pressure or influence.

Peter Fernandes, a resident of Fatorda, voiced his concerns, saying, "This

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– Sagun Naik, *MMC councillor*

survey is a step in the right direction, but only if it's done honestly. If political pressure is going to protect some violators, then what's the point? Every illegal structure, no matter who owns it, must be accounted for."

Councillor Sagun Naik echoed similar concerns, emphasizing that the process must be conducted without bias. "There should

be no hide-and-seek in this matter," he said. "Local councillors must be taken into confidence, and the final survey report should be tabled before the entire council for transparency."

Naik stressed that political influence should not interfere with the enforcement of the law and that equal treatment must be ensured for all, regardless of connections or status.

Farmers prep fields for kharif crop as Goa rolls out digital crop monitoring

60 paddy and 6 sugarcane fields covered by yield prediction tech that replaces cumbersome manual process

Team Herald

MARGAO: With monsoon rains lashing Goa, farmers across the state's paddy-growing regions have started preparing their fields for the kharif crop, even as the agriculture department implements a new digital system to monitor crop yields more accurately.

Farmers have begun ploughing operations ahead of sowing, with many continuing to employ traditional methods using bullocks to pull ploughs through waterlogged fields. The manual transplanting of paddy saplings also remains widespread across the state's 23,000-odd hectares under paddy cultivation.

"Land holdings of many farmers are small and so it is not feasible to use tractors. Also, in several regions the topography of their fields is such that tractors

Goa's paddy production during the previous kharif season fell significantly to 77,769 tonnes from the usual output of over one lakh tonnes, primarily due to extreme weather conditions and flooding of agricultural fields. The agriculture department is now banking on more uniform monsoon conditions this year to achieve record production levels exceeding the 1.1 lakh tonnes recorded in 2023-24

and mechanical transplanters cannot access their fields. So, these farmers have to rely on traditional methods of ploughing and transplanting manually," Director of Agriculture Sandeep Fal Desai, while speaking to the media.

Agriculture officials highlighted that an increasing number of farmers are adopting mechanised approaches using tractors for ploughing and mechanical implements for transplanting saplings.

Simultaneously, the Directorate of Agriculture has adopted a cutting-edge

digital system developed by the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare to estimate crop yields more precisely. The system features real-time data entry from fields through a mobile application, Global Positioning System (GPS)-tagged images for better accountability and verification, automated plot selection to reduce human bias, and a web-based dashboard for centralised monitoring and yield generation.

"This system is only for field crops, not horticulture crops. So far, 60 paddy plots and six sugarcane plots have

been covered in Goa. Now, a survey of rabi crops is ongoing for pulses, groundnuts, and vegetables," an agriculture official told the media.

The Digital General Crop Estimation Survey (DGCES) represents a significant departure from the decades-old manual process. Traditionally, the General Crop Estimation Survey (GCES) employed Crop Cutting Experiments (CCE) based on scientifically designed sampling methods, covering 68 types of crops including 52 food and 16 non-food varieties. However, the manual process of recording and data submission has been time-consuming and prone to delays.

"With the implementation of the DGCES platform, Goa will begin capturing CCE data in real time through a dedicated mobile application and web portal," the official said.

MAX. TEMP 27.5 °C
MIN. TEMP 23.5 °C

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Forget efficiency and power – what's the storage capacity?

Sopo collection row at wholesale fish market

Team Herald

MARGAO: A group of boat owners alleging irregularities in sopo (market fee) collection outside the Margao wholesale fish market met Margao Municipal Council Chairperson Damodar Shirodkar demanding immediate action against the unauthorised practices.

In a meeting attended by the MMC Chief Officer and several councillors, the boat owners led by Savio D'Silva and Jose Philip D'Souza alleged that they are being forced to pay sopo amounts well above the officially approved rates. More troubling, they claimed, is the illegal collection of fees from small-scale buyers such as fish vendors using bicycles and motorcycles—who, under current rules, are not liable to pay such charges.

Savio D'Silva expressed frustration over the unchecked collection, stating, "A huge sopo is being collected

from vendors operating outside the wholesale fish market. We don't understand how authorities can charge fees both inside and outside the market. It clearly suggests illegalities in the system."

He added that another individual, believed to be a different contractor, has allegedly started collecting parking fees from those parking their vehicles and even bicycles around the market premises.

"These practices are adding a financial burden on small vendors and discouraging fair trade," D'Silva said.

The boat owners informed the civic body that these grievances are not new but have been persistently ignored. They have now formally demanded that the MMC intervene and conduct a thorough investigation into the matter.

"We want the sopo system to be transparent and lawful. This exploitation must end," the delegation told the council.

