

CLEARING CUNCOLIM'S TOXIC WASTE COULD COST STATE RS 15 CRORE

Pollution Control Board begins process to remove 50,000 tonnes of hazardous waste left behind by Sunrise Zinc Limited at the industrial estate since 2007; National Environmental Engineering Research Institute confirms severe contamination

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) has initiated the process to dispose of approximately 50,000 tonnes of toxic waste left behind by Sunrise Zinc Limited at the Cuncolim Industrial Estate since 2007 with preliminary estimates suggesting that the disposal operation could cost the state exchequer around Rs 15 crore.

This action follows a comprehensive study by the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), which has confirmed the severe contamination of the site and its impact on nearby water bodies.

NEERI's detailed study revealed alarming levels of contamination, with 95 percent of the samples exceeding safe limits for hazardous materials. The presence of dangerous heavy metals such as lead, manga-

nese, beryllium, chromium, copper, nickel, cadmium, and zinc highlights the severe environmental degradation over the past nearly two decades.

GSPCB member secretary Sanjeev Joglekar has requested the Director of the Department of Science, Technology and Waste Management to take the necessary steps for the remediation and disposal of the waste through the Goa Waste Management Corporation (GWMC). This move aligns with Chief Minister Pramod Sawant's budget proposal for 2025-2026, which includes allocating funds for transferring the waste to the Common Hazardous Waste Treatment Storage and Disposal Facility (CHWTSDF) at Pissurlem Industrial Estate.

NEERI's findings are particularly concerning regarding specific metal concentrations. Lead leachability was found to be 14 times

ESTIMATED COST FOR DISPOSAL



Based on a proposal from Ponda Envocare Limited, the estimated cost for disposal is approximately Rs 14.98 cr, including transportation, GST, and escrow charges

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- Establishing a new secured landfill within Cuncolim or transporting the waste to the existing facility in Pissurlem
- The latter is the preferred option, as it transfers long-term liability and allows for the restoration of the original site

the permissible limit, manganese nearly five times, and chromium over five times. Beryllium levels were also significantly elevated.

Out of the 45 samples analysed, 39 were classified

as hazardous waste according to the Hazardous and Other Wastes Management and Transboundary Rules, 2016. Notably, all 27 depth samples exceeded contamination limits, indicating

widespread contamination throughout the site.

The estimated cost for disposal, based on a proposal from Ponda Envocare Limited, is approximately Rs 14.98 crore, including transportation, GST, and escrow charges.

The toxic waste originated from Sunrise Zinc Limited's operations, which ceased in 2007. Despite the High Court's directives and subsequent financial difficulties of the company, the hazardous waste remained on-site, eventually becoming an orphaned liability.

NEERI's assessment proposed two solutions: establishing a new secured landfill within Cuncolim or transporting the waste to the existing facility in Pissurlem. The latter is the preferred option, as it transfers long-term liability and allows for the restoration of the original site.

The GSPCB is currently seeking funding from

the Department of Science and Technology due to its limited financial resources, following unsuccessful attempts to secure Central Government assistance.

Recent delays in seasonal covering operations have further highlighted the urgency of the situation, with local residents threatening action if disposal is not initiated promptly.

The NEERI report underscores the risks associated with the unscientific storage of the waste for over 15 years, emphasising the potential for pollutant migration and the failure of successive governments to address this environmental hazard.

Local experts believe that transporting the waste to Pissurlem offers the most viable long-term solution, albeit with a significant financial commitment that underscores the consequences of inadequate waste management and delayed action.

Curtorkars oppose fish farming project

Fear project will disrupt agri practices & damage fields

Team Herald

MARGAO: A fish farming project proposed in the agricultural fields at Curtorkim has drawn strong opposition from villagers, especially farmers, who fear that it would disrupt the traditional agricultural practices and damage the fertile fields that define the village, as the "greenery of Salcete".

The issue was discussed at length during a meeting held on Monday at the Curtorkim Panchayat office, attended by Curtorkim MLA Aleixo Reginaldo Lourenco, former Zilla Panchayat member Moreno Rebelo, local leaders, and several citizens, besides farmers.

The project, proposed by a private party, aims to con-

ing this could set a dangerous precedent, prompting other farmers in Curtorkim Add, Ralloi Add, and neighbouring areas to convert their fields into fish ponds.

Expressing serious concerns over the environmental and economic impact of the project, Dias said, "The fields in Sirgem Add are cultivated twice a year. Many families depend on the seasonal crops for their livelihood. Introducing fish farming could lead to pollution and long-term damage to surrounding fields."

He said that chemicals, fish excrement, fishmeal, fish oil, and leftover feed used in aquaculture could contaminate adjacent fields, making them unsuitable for agriculture.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

- The project, proposed by a private party, aims to construct a pond for fish farming in Sirgem Add
- The locals said the proposal involves digging up the field to create a fish pond and using the excavated mud to construct a bund around it
- Cautioned that this could set a dangerous precedent, prompting other farmers in Curtorkim Add, Ralloi Add, and neighbouring areas to convert their fields into fish ponds
- Raised concerns over the project's environmental and economic impact
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Peter Dias, Chairman of Sirgem Add and Angddi Tollem Tenants Association

struct a pond for fish farming in the Sirgem Add area.

The Sirgem Add and Angddi Tollem Tenants Association, led by Chairman Peter Dias, were among the first to raise their objections.

According to Dias, the proposal involves digging up the field to create a fish pond and using the excavated mud to construct a bund around it.

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Farmers and residents criticised the panchayat body for entertaining the proposal. They asserted the importance of preserving Curtorkim's agricultural heritage.

The Panchayat decided to support the villagers and assured that no permission would be granted for the proposed fish farming project, bringing relief to the farming community.

SEARCHING FOR 'WEALTH' IN WASTE?



A ragpicker forages for plastic waste amidst the pile of mixed garbage strewn all over at Mapusa, which remains uncollected on a regular basis

Beekeepers call for planting honeybee-friendly trees

Team Herald

MARGAO: With the State's 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' tree plantation campaign currently underway, the Beekeepers Society in Parra, Bardez, has urged authorities to focus on planting species that attract honeybees and butterflies.

In a letter to Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, the society appealed for the inclusion of fruit-bearing and timber-yielding trees that support bee colonies and improve honey output.

The society emphasised that expanding the presence of pollinator-friendly trees would have long-term benefits for biodiversity, agriculture, and livelihoods. "Trees

that attract honeybees and butterflies lead to the multiplication of bee colonies and increased honey production," the group stated. Honey produced from the flora of the Western Ghats, they noted, is especially valued for its fragrance, flavour and superior quality, often selling for Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,000 per kg.

Beekeepers in Goa typically extract about 10 kg of honey per hive each season. The society recommended that government departments plant trees such as Mancurad and Mangilar mangoes, dwarf jackfruit, chickoo, and breadfruit. These should be accompanied by forest and fruit trees that flower from August to May.

Frustrated over power cuts, Majorda residents demand permanent solution

Team Herald

MARGAO: Power fluctuations and unannounced outages, which have plagued Majorda for several months, have left the residents of Majorda frustrated as they claim that the unreliable electricity supply has disrupted daily life, impacted homes, businesses, and students, and have now demanded a permanent solution from the authorities concerned.

"The power cuts have become a routine inconvenience. It's affecting our work, studies, and daily chores. We deserve a stable power supply," said Milagres Dias, a resident of Majorda. For small business owners, the outages are causing serious financial strain.

Francis Cruz, who owns a grocery shop, said, "We've lost money due to damaged equipment caused by voltage fluctuations. It's not just inconvenience—it's becoming impossible to operate a business under these conditions."

The students are also bearing the brunt. "There's no predictability. Online classes and study sessions get interrupted constantly. It's putting our education and future at risk," said Savio Fernandes, a college student from the area.

Despite repeated complaints to the Electricity Department, the residents report no noticeable improvements. Many feel their complaints are being ignored, and that the response from

officials has been slow and ineffective. Rosario Fernandes, another resident, said, "It's impossible to even sit at home during the day without electricity. Small businesses are suffering huge losses, especially during the summer."

With no relief in sight, Majorda residents have called for urgent and permanent solutions. They demand a reliable and uninterrupted power supply that supports basic living conditions, economic activity, and student needs. As complaints grow louder across South Goa, affected communities are hoping for swift intervention by the authorities to upgrade power infrastructure and implement a more efficient and responsive electricity service.

30 years on, revival of 65,000 sqm of fallow fields begins in Sarzora

Team Herald

MARGAO: A major agricultural revival effort is underway in Sarzora, where nearly 65,000 square metres of land left uncultivated for over three decades is being brought back into use. Sowing operations began on Sunday, supported by agricultural service providers and with active participation from the local community and farmers.

Fr George Quadros, popularly known as the "Paddy Man of Goa", said, "The initiative was farmer-driven, with the local comunidade playing a key role in uniting cultivators to reclaim their land. We've only offered



A priest blesses the fields in the presence of Sarzora villagers

technical support and guidance. It is the farmers who are spearheading the revival. Our goal is to enable them to work independently in the coming years."

The groundwork for sowing was completed a few days earlier, and paddy seeds were planted across a large section of the area. Fr Quad-

ros said the team expects to complete sowing across all 65,000 square metres within the next couple of days. Mechanised equipment, including tractors, was used to facilitate the large-scale effort to restore the long-neglected fields.

Velim MLA Cruz Silva, Sarzora panchayat members,

the ZAO, and farming representatives from neighbouring areas were present. The turnout, Fr Quadros noted, reflected a broader interest in community-led agricultural restoration.

The initiative is part of a growing movement to reverse the trend of agricultural land abandonment in parts of Goa.

Fr Quadros and his team are focusing on empowering local farmers with the know-how to use modern tools and techniques to resume cultivation.

The revival of Sarzora's fallow fields is being viewed as a positive step towards reclaiming Goa's traditional agrarian practices.

'Decaying' Lohia Maidan an insult to Goa's freedom movement: Citizens

Call for transparency regarding the Rs 3 crore spent on renovation; demand permanent maintenance plan

Team Herald

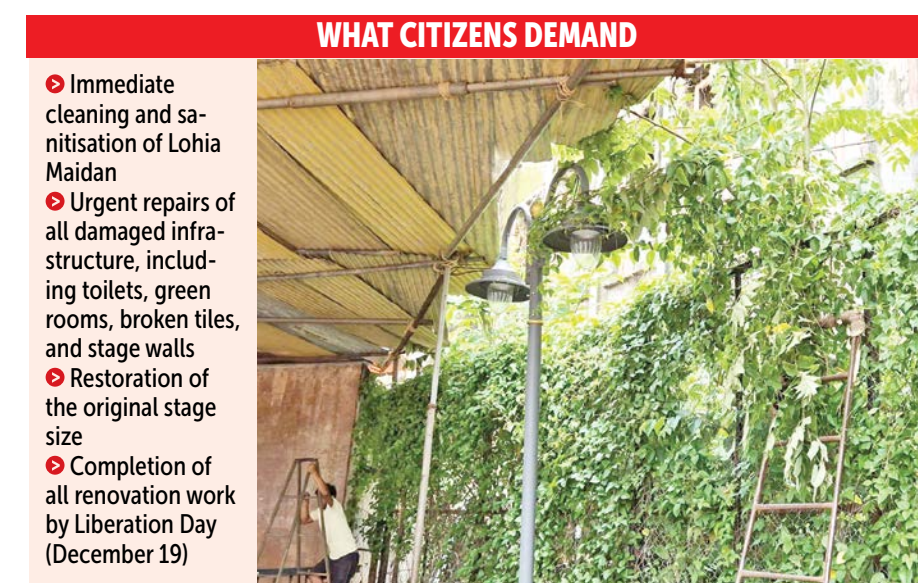
MARGAO: A group of citizens from Margao has described the deteriorating condition of the recently "renovated" historic Lohia Maidan as a disgrace and insult to Goa's freedom movement.

Speaking to the media during a site inspection, Prabhav Naik highlighted the deterioration of the historic space, despite a reported Rs 3 crore being spent on its refurbishment.

"It is shocking to witness the dilapidated condition of Lohia Maidan. The background wall of the stage is already infected with fungus, there are visible cracks in the plaster, and paint is peeling — all signs of poor-quality materials and lack of maintenance," Naik said.

The iconic stage, once the heart of cultural and political activity in Goa, has not only been reduced in size but now sits amid filth, decay, and unsafe infrastructure. "This is not just negligence — it's a betrayal of the legacy of Dr Ram Manohar Lohia, Dr Julio Menezes, and all who fought for Goa's freedom," he added.

Naik exposed the appalling conditions of the backstage area, which includes broken toilets, damaged wash basins, non-functional taps, broken locks, and an open urinal, calling it a



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Prabhav Naik, Margao resident

public health hazard.

Adding to the embarrassment, wild weeds, litter, and plastic waste have overtaken parts of the Maidan. Several granite and marble tiles are broken, missing, or dangerously loose, posing safety risks to visitors.

Naik also questioned the accountability of the Margao Municipal Council (MMC), which continues to

collect booking fees from citizens for using Lohia Maidan. "You cannot collect public money and ignore public responsibility. Cleanliness, maintenance, and safety are basic civic duties," he said.

He appealed to Chief Minister Pramod Sawant with the following demands: Immediate cleaning and sanitisation of the

entire maidan, urgent repairs of all damaged infrastructure, including toilets, green rooms, broken tiles, and stage walls, restoration of the original stage size, and completion of all renovation work by Goa Liberation Day (December 19).

Naik called for transparency regarding the Rs 3 crore spent on renovation and called for a permanent maintenance plan to prevent further degradation of the heritage site.

"The people of Margao and Goa will no longer tolerate the continued neglect of a space that symbolises our freedom struggle. We demand respect for our history and responsible governance," said Prabhav Naik.