

Sand dune destroyed at Varca, villagers dread seawater ingress

Unidentified culprits allegedly flatten sand dune using earthmover; locals file police complaint, demand action from Goa Coastal Zone Management Authority

Team Herald

MARGAO: A serious case of environmental violation has come to light in Varca Pedda, where a sand dune—protected under Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) norms—has been illegally destroyed.

The incident, which took place in a protected coastal area, has sparked outrage among local residents and environmentalists, who are calling for immediate action against the perpetrators and urgent restoration of the damage caused.

The motive behind the destruction remains unclear, but the implications are alarming. The sand dune served as a vital natural defence, shielding nearby paddy fields from the intrusion of saline seawater. With its removal, there is



now an increased risk of seawater flooding agricultural land during high tides or rough weather. Such an event could lead to the loss of crops and render the fertile land unusable for future cultivation. Local panch member Batist Fernandies confirmed the incident and called it 'destruction

of nature'. "The sand dunes act as natural barriers. Now that they've been cut, there is a real risk of seawater entering our fields, which could ruin upcoming crop cultivation," he said.

"Someone drove an earthmover over the dune and broke it apart. Some people are blaming the farmers, but it's not them—their fields get flooded with seawater too. We can't rebuild this dune or fill it back up. Varca is seeing a lot of destruction; we've already lost many dunes, and now seawater floods the shacks as well," said Shohail Furtado, an environmentalist based in Varca.

The Varca Panchayat has taken suo motu cognisance and filed formal complaints with multiple authorities, including the Police Department,

the Goa Coastal Zone Management Authority (GCZMA), the District Collector, and the Department of Tourism.

Additionally, a team of Panchayat members conducted a site inspection to assess the extent of the damage and gather evidence for further legal and administrative action.

"This is not just an environmental issue—it's a threat to our livelihoods and our community's future," said a local panchayat member. "We cannot allow such violations to go unchecked."

Residents of Varca Pedda have strongly condemned the act and are demanding strict enforcement of CRZ laws. They are calling for the immediate identification and punishment of those responsible, as well as the restoration of the destroyed dune.

Citizens cautious as CM mulls regularisation of houses on govt, Comunidade land

Team Herald

MARGAO: Chief Minister Pramod Sawant's recent statement regarding the regularisation of houses across Goa has sparked a wave of mixed reactions from citizens and civil society members.

While some have welcomed the move as a relief for long-standing homeowners, others fear it may open the door to misuse and benefit outsiders.

The Chief Minister indicated that the government is considering a policy to regularise houses constructed on Comunidade and government land, particularly those built before a cut-off date yet to be finalised. The initiative, aimed at addressing long-pending issues related to land ownership and occupancy rights, has quickly become a topic of heated debate.

Civil rights activist Roque Pereira expressed concerns about the lack of clarity in the proposal.

"If the process isn't transparent and strictly monitored, outsiders could exploit it. People who never lived here or have encroached recently might end up getting legal ownership, while genuine locals still struggle for their rights," he said.

However, Joao Souza, a senior citizen from Curtorim, supported the

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— Roque Pereira, activist

Chief Minister's intention. "There are families who've been living in their homes for generations but still lack legal papers. If this helps them secure their property rights, it's a step in the right direction," he remarked.

Ritesh Naik, a youth leader and legal practitioner from Vasco, offered a measured viewpoint. "The idea is commendable—many Goans have waited for decades for such a decision. But the implementation must be watertight. A fair verification mechanism, clear eligibility criteria, and legal safeguards must be put in place to prevent misuse," he emphasised.

The government is expected to table a draft of the proposed policy during the upcoming Assembly session. Several citizen groups and opposition leaders have already called for a public consultation process before any legislation is finalised.

Woman ends life, leaves post accusing boyfriend of harassment

Team Herald

MARGAO: A 32-year-old woman from a village in Cunolim reportedly died by suicide at Khola beach in Canacona after posting a social media status claiming she was ending her life due to alleged harassment by her boyfriend. Canacona police received a tipoff about a body floating in the seawater and retrieved it with the help of fire personnel. The woman was initially reported missing by her family at Cunolim Police Station. Investigations revealed that prior to

her death, the deceased allegedly received a phone call from her boyfriend and his sister during which she was verbally abused and called "mentally ill" (mentally ill). The callers also allegedly told her to "go ahead and commit suicide" following a breakup. Based on a complaint lodged by the victim's mother of Barcem-Quepem, the Cunolim police registered an FIR. The complaint states that between June 18 and 19, the accused—identified as Gaurish Gosavi of Vasco and his sister Lochan Gosavi of Bicholim—humiliated and incited the deceased over the phone.

Sopo tender delay triggers turf war at wholesale fish market

Team Herald

The SGPDA last floated a tender in late 2023—expecting a monthly revenue of approximately Rs 32 lakh—but received no bids due to overly stringent eligibility requirements. Subsequent attempts to reissue the tender have stalled, even after the criteria were simplified in December

MARGAO: Disorder and confusion persist at the Margao wholesale fish market, where the failure to initiate a fresh tender for sopo collection has heightened tensions between vendors and authorities.

Despite repeated appeals by stakeholders, no formal tender has been issued, triggering clashes between agents appointed by the Margao Municipal Council (MMC) and those deployed by the South Goa Planning and Development Authority (SGPDA).

The conflict has erupted over overlapping jurisdiction,

with both bodies dispatching sopo collectors to the same vendors in overlapping zones. The resulting confrontations have not only disrupted market operations but also raised serious concerns regarding hygiene and infrastructure.

Fish vendor Francis Fernandes described the situation: "There's a total lack of clarity—vendors don't know

who to pay, and the collectors keep changing. It has turned the market into a chaotic mess." His frustration is echoed by many, who claim that the absence of a unified system has created fertile ground for disputes and inefficiency.

Meanwhile, Roshan Naik, another vendor, said, "In addition to the payment confusion, the market is falling apart. Drains

are blocked, fish waste lies around, and no one's cleaning up. Until the tender process is sorted, it's the vendors and the consumers who will suffer."

Public records reveal that the SGPDA last floated a tender in late 2023—expecting a monthly revenue of approximately Rs 32 lakh—but received no bids due to overly stringent eligibility requirements.

Subsequent attempts to reissue the tender have stalled, even after the criteria were simplified in December. In February 2025, sources within the SGPDA confirmed that although documentation was complete, the tender still

awaited final approval.

In the meantime, municipal authorities continue to collect sopo through interim contractors and internal teams, often overlapping with SGPDA's efforts. The jurisdictional clash has led to police intervention after both agencies filed complaints against each other.

Local fishermen have also criticised the deteriorating state of public amenities. Earlier this year, a separate report highlighted frequently clogged drains, overflowing waste, and crumbling infrastructure—all tied to the administrative vacuum created by the ongoing tender impasse.

Watercolours and wetlands: Painting the khazans back to life

The wetlands of Goa—muddy, brackish, ancient—don't often feature in picture postcards. Yet, for Melanie Costa Pereira from Raia, these khazans hold the hues of memory, loss, and resistance.

Now 34, Melanie is studying art restoration and conservation, with an artistic practice that blends traditional techniques with environmental storytelling. For her project with Goa Water Stories, she turned to her childhood: to the khazans she once waded through barefoot, to the rice farmers and fishermen who live by the tides, and to the pigment-rich soil beneath her feet.



value of these wetlands—especially among younger Goans. Art allows people to connect emotionally with what they might otherwise ignore. Through her work, she hopes people can see the khazans not just as 'wastelands' but as living systems full of meaning and promise, so one thinks twice before paving them over.



“My childhood was spent in these wetlands, surrounded by its rich biodiversity and the people who depend on it. As I grow older, I watch these once-thriving ecosystems deteriorate, replaced by irresponsible urbanisation and neglect. Seeing the khazans disappear before my eyes has been heartbreaking. I feel a strong responsibility to do my part in documenting and preserving them through my art”

— Melanie Costa Pereira

Her zines aim to spark that curiosity: they're packed with facts about sluice gates, fish species, local legends, and even foraged recipes. Through this project, she's come to see water differently—not as a commodity or a crisis, but as a mirror of governance and community will. "The khazans managed water with such balance—feeding rice, filtering saline intrusion, supporting fishing. Now we're failing to manage the same systems because we've lost sight of the long view."

"Water equity is possible," she says, "but only if we shift from extraction to stewardship. Goa still has a chance to repair what's broken. We just have to want it enough."

Goa Water Stories is a collaboration with the Living Waters Museum, the Centre for Public Policy and Governance at the Goa Institute of Management, the Goa University and the Sunaparanta Goa Centre for the Arts.



Scan the QR code to experience Melanie's project, 'Khazan Clay Chronicles'

"This project is deeply personal," she says. "My grandmother, Cora Costa Pereira, was the first woman Sarpanch of Raia. She led a village that is shaped by its khazans. I grew up surrounded by these wetlands—watching egrets feed, feeling the sting of saline wind, listening to stories of flood cycles and fish breeds. I've seen these ecosystems unravel over the years. It's devastating."

In her visual research, Melanie collects earth from the khazans—red laterite, yellow ochre, brown and black clay—and grinds it into pigments. These form the base of her watercolour paintings, which depict both the beauty and vulnerability of these engineered wetlands. She has also created a series of hand-drawn zines—playful, punchy booklets packed with information on khazan ecosys-

Abandoned houses misused for parties, exploitation of minors, warns womens' group

Team Herald

MARGAO: A massive fire broke out in the wake of a series of violent crimes involving minors, women's rights group Bailancho Ekvott has raised serious concerns over the growing threat to child safety in Goa.

President Auda Viegas, addressing the media, highlighted how unmonitored spaces—particularly abandoned ancestral homes—are becoming hubs for underage drinking, drug abuse, and exploitation.

According to Viegas, many of these homes, once vibrant with family and life, now stand deserted as Goans pursue foreign citizenship and careers overseas.

"Some of these houses are watched over by care-

takers, while others are left to crumble—or worse, become silent grounds for illegal activity," she said.

One such incident involved a 15-year-old girl found partying with older boys in an abandoned bungalow where alcohol was reportedly consumed freely. "No one asked how she got there or why," Viegas remarked, expressing concern over the lack of community vigilance.

In other parts of the state, minors are reportedly gathering in unregulated wooden shacks, referred to locally as "black spots," where drugs, alcohol, and abuse go unchecked. The group also pointed to birthday parties turning into overnight drinking events, where minors consume beer without age verifica-

tion. Alarmingly, regulated drugs like the emergency contraceptive pill are reportedly being sold over the counter to minors with no regulation.

Viegas noted that many parents—especially first-generation learners—struggle with how to discipline their children, fearing judgment or making mistakes. "The fear of being wrong outweighs the fear of what might go wrong," she said.

Bailancho Ekvott has called for increased community awareness, stronger parental involvement, and stricter enforcement by authorities to safeguard children from growing social dangers. "We cannot allow silence and neglect to become the norm," Viegas warned.

Fire breaks out at ammunition unit in Verna, damage runs into lakhs

MARGAO: A massive fire broke out early Saturday morning at Hughes Precision Manufacturing Pvt. Ltd., a small-caliber ammunition unit in Verna Industrial Estate, causing damages estimated in lakhs. Verna Fire Station Officer Dilesh Gaonkar said they received a call at 4am. Initial efforts by one fire tender proved inadequate due to the scale of the blaze. Reinforcements were summoned from Margao, Vasco, Ponda, and Panjim. It took around five hours to bring the flames under control.

Fire personnel had to break into the premises to douse the fire. Ammunition stock, machinery, and other goods were reportedly damaged. As a precaution, one fire tender remained stationed at the site into the evening due to lingering smoke.

Fortunately, no casualties were reported as the factory remained shut at night. A security guard on duty escaped unharmed.

Verna police, led by PI Anand Shirodker, have launched an inquiry. Officials from the Directorate of Fire & Emergency Services, Factories and Boilers, and Electricity Department inspected the site.

MAX. TEMP 32.4 °C
MIN. TEMP 27 °C

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Snatch-proof chains are in fashion these days.