

# CITIZENS RAISE FORMAL OBJECTIONS TO MARGAO MASTER PLAN 2041, DEMAND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Group plays exclusion of stakeholders from the planning process; raise serious concerns about the plan's disconnect from ground realities

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Citizens of Margao have formally objected to the Draft Margao Master Plan 2041, raising serious concerns about the planning process and demanding greater community involvement in shaping the city's future. The objections were submitted to the Margao Municipal Council (MMC) by Goyche Fudle-Pilghe Khatir (GFPK), with a copy being submitted to the Goa State Urban Development Agency (GSUDA).

The controversy stems from the recent public meeting at the MMC hall where the Mumbai-based consultant presented the draft plan on behalf of GSUDA. During the presentation, the consultant clarified that the master plan is non-statutory and merely supplements the existing Outline Development Plan (ODP) rather than replacing it, a clarification that has sparked further concern among citizens.

GFPK's primary objec-



tion centres on the foundation of the master plan itself, arguing that since it supplements the existing ODP of Margao, which has been widely criticized as flawed and is currently under review by the High Court following citizen petitions, any planning based on this controversial document would inherit the same fundamental problems. The group contends that building upon a challenged and unacceptable ODP will only perpetuate controversy and doubt in the planning process.

The citizen's group has strongly criticized the exclusion of stakeholders

from the planning process. "The Master Plan 2041, was never initiated for sourcing vision and ideas amongst the stakeholders, and instead it's only been shared as a final Plan, merely reducing the stakeholder's involvement to a spectator in a top-down approach rather than ensuring democratic participation in Margao's future," said GFPK President Jack Mascarenhas.

The group has raised serious concerns about the plan's disconnect from ground realities. "The plan fails to address the ground realities of a congested and saturated city. It appears

CAUSE OF CONCERN

❖ **Flawed foundation:** The Draft Master Plan is based on the existing Outline Development Plan (ODP), which is under High Court review and widely criticized.

❖ **Disconnect from ground realities:** The plan reportedly overlooks pressing urban challenges such as congestion, waste, pollution, mobility and slum development.

❖ **Jurisdictional ambiguity:** There is confusion about the plan's geographical scope—whether it covers only Margao city or the entire Municipal Council jurisdiction, including Fatorda.

❖ **Environmental neglect:** The Sal River and other ecological concerns like green cover, water body pollution and flood plains have been insufficiently addressed.

❖ **Unrealistic heritage zone proposal:** Citizens argue the heritage zone proposal lacks feasibility and demonstrates poor understanding of local heritage and spatial constraints.

❖ **Demand for democratic process:** Citizens demand finalisation of the ODP through public participation before moving forward with the Master Plan, stressing a bottom-up planning approach.

more like a dream being sold to the public, ignoring the practical challenges Margao faces daily—mobility, garbage, parking, pollution, slums, sewage, infrastructure," Mascarenhas emphasized. GFPK warns that without realistic ground data, the theoretical approach will only create long-term problems.

The citizens have expressed surprise at the proposal for a heritage zone when there appears to be no realistic scope for expansion. They argue that the plan lacks sensitivity and awareness regarding Margao's heritage value, open

spaces, recreational needs, green cover, climate change risks, water body pollution, runoff, agricultural fields, and low-lying flood plains.

A significant concern raised by the group involves basic jurisdictional confusion, noting that the presenters and planners were unclear about whether the Master Plan covers only Margao city or includes the entire Municipal Council jurisdiction, which encompasses Fatorda. This fundamental oversight has led citizens to question the entire planning exercise.

Environmental concerns

feature prominently in the objections, particularly regarding the Sal River, which GFPK describes as a vital part of Margao that has not been given adequate priority. The group emphasizes that a healthy river is essential for a well-planned city, yet the current plan fails to address environmental challenges adequately.

The citizens have also highlighted the absence of calculated or transparent approaches to critical urban issues including density management, commerce planning, traffic solutions, service provision, food re-

quirements, fresh air quality, drinking water supply, and waste management. They lamented that this lack of comprehensive planning undermines public confidence and makes the process appear as what they term a 'theoretical experiment on city residents by outsiders'.

GFPK described the stakeholder presentation as an exercise in futility that left both presenters and participants frustrated. Rather than clarifying the city's future direction, the presentation reportedly added to the confusion

among Margao's already concerned citizens.

Thus, GFPK has demanded that the ODP of Margao be finalized first with people's participation, followed by stakeholder meetings to consult on all Master Plan-related issues at the conceptual stage. They are calling for comprehensive data collection on all parameters to be gathered and shared publicly, with priority areas identified for primary attention in the Master Plan before addressing secondary issues.

The citizen's group has urged authorities to approach the Margao Master Plan as a community effort with a bottom-up approach, emphasizing the need for collective participation in shaping the city's future. They await further developments on the matter while maintaining their stance that meaningful community involvement is essential for any successful urban planning initiative in Margao.

## Despite collector's order, unauthorised gaddas remain outside Aquem Power House

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Despite explicit orders from the South Goa District Collector to relocate unauthorised gaddas from outside the Power House in Aquem, several continue to operate in violation of the law.

The action was prompted by a formal complaint from Executive Engineer Kashinath Shetye, who raised serious concerns about the stalls blocking access to the power department facility.

In his complaint to the Collector, Shetye stated that the gaddas were obstructing key entry points needed for the operational

efficiency and safety of the power department.

He further highlighted that the stalls are located on the footpath, which is a clear breach of court orders banning commercial encroachments on pedestrian walkways.

Following the complaint, the District Collector directed the local civic body to immediately initiate action and ensure the removal of the unauthorized vendors. However, days passed and the gaddas remained in place, suggesting either non-compliance or deliberate inaction by local authorities.

The issue has taken a disturbing turn with the

reported transfer of Shetye shortly after filing the complaint. While no official reason has been provided, the timing has fuelled speculation that the transfer may have been a retaliatory move to deter further action against the encroachments.

"This is nothing short of encouraging illegalities," said Krishna Raikar, a long-time resident of Aquem. "Instead of supporting an officer who was doing his duty, the authorities are punishing him. The gaddas are illegal, they block footpaths and access to essential infrastructure, and yet no action is taken."

## MOSQUITO MENACE



Stagnant rainwater collected in a pothole at Mapusa market becomes a breeding ground for mosquitoes, posing a malaria and dengue risk to vendors, visitors, and those conducting business in the area. Swift preventive action by the authorities is urgently needed

## Benaulim fishermen seek govt's nod for dedicated berthing zone at hatchery site

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Fishermen from Benaulim have renewed calls for the Goa government to allocate a section of the long-defunct hatchery complex in the village exclusively for their fishing activities, pressing for 5,000 square metres to be set aside to berth their country-made canoes and support related operations.

With their livelihoods increasingly under threat due to the absence of a permanent docking site, the fishing community is looking to Chief Minister Pramod Sawant to deliver on his assurance that their longstanding concerns would be addressed. On the CM's instructions, a team led by Deputy Collector of Margao M Shabir and Salcete Mamlatdar Vimod Dalal carried out a site inspection at the Benaulim hatchery, accompanied by local fishermen.

The property, spread across roughly 50,000 square metres, has been lying unused for several years, with abandoned water tanks and derelict structures marking the area. Fishermen contend that allocating a portion of the land for fishing purposes would not only resolve the issue of berthing but also open up space for traditional practices like drying and storing fish.

Jose Fernandes, president of the Benaulim fishing association, said that the request for 5,000 sqm was minimal compared to the full extent of the land. "We're not asking for all of it. We only need enough space to keep our boats safe, store fish, and carry on basic operations. Without a designated area,

### PRESENT STATUS

- ❖ **Forced to use private land, leading to eviction threats and legal notices.**
- ❖ **Lack of permanent docking area jeopardising livelihood.**
- ❖ **The land has been idle and neglected for years, making it ideal for fishing-related use**
- ❖ **Urge government to act on the CM's initial support**

we're being forced to park our vessels on private land," he said.

This year, tensions escalated after some private landowners, upset by the use of their beachfront property, lodged complaints with the Fisheries Department. "We've even received notices warning us that our licences might be cancelled if we don't vacate these areas," Fernandes said.

Fisherman Pele Fernandes expressed gratitude to the CM for initiating the inspection and hoped that concrete steps would soon follow. "The hatchery site has stood idle for years. Using just a fraction of it could solve so many of our problems," he said.

Deputy Collector Shabir acknowledged the difficulties faced by the fishermen during the monsoon and off-season periods when vessels are pulled ashore. "The land is clearly accessible from the shore and suitable for the community's use," he noted after the inspection, adding that a report would be submitted to the District Collector Egna Cleetus for onward transmission to the government.

## Raia panchayat sees surprise win for Jacinta Dias amid internal rifts

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** In a surprising political turn, Jacinta Dias was elected the new Sarpanch of Raia village panchayat on Monday, following a dramatic cross vote from within the majority group of panchayat members.

At the panchayat meeting convened to elect a new Sarpanch, Dias secured a narrow victory over Xavier Fernandes by a 6-5 vote. The result came as a shock to many, especially since Fernandes was the presumed frontrunner with backing from the six-member group that had recently gained control.

Just days earlier, the same group of six panchayat members had successfully voted out the then Deputy

Sarpanch and elected Manuel Rodrigues in his place. The leadership reshuffle was set in motion after the resignation of Mario D'Souza, which left the Sarpanch's chair vacant.

It was widely expected that the newly elected Sarpanch would emerge from the dominant group that installed Rodrigues. However, a surprise cross vote by one of the six members derailed that plan, allowing Jacinta Dias to clinch the top post.

The outcome has reshaped the power dynamics in Raia's local body. With Dias as Sarpanch and Rodrigues, from the rival group, as Deputy Sarpanch, the village panchayat is now led by a politically split executive—a rare and potentially unstable configuration.

## Prolonged power outage at Manora-Raia sparks frustration

Residents furious over regular black-outs; lash out at power dept for failing to address issue

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Residents of Manora-Raia grappled with a prolonged power outage on Monday, intensifying long-standing frustrations over the area's unreliable electricity supply.

The outage, which lasted several hours, disrupted daily activities and highlighted persistent power supply issues faced by the community over recent months.

Adding to their frustration, one official from the power department reportedly stated that he was unaware of the power failure in Manora. This shocking claim has only deepened residents' discontent, raising questions

about the communication and accountability within the department.

Local residents said frequent power failures have become a distressing norm, severely affecting work, education, and household routines. Many expressed disappointment at the lack of timely resolutions and growing negligence in addressing the problem.

"Frequent power failures are making life increasingly difficult. We have endured this silently for months, but now it's affecting everything—work, children's studies, and essential household chores," said a resident who wished to remain anonymous.

Menino Quadros, a long-time resident of Manora, voiced deep concern and frustration. "This is not an isolated incident. Erratic power supply has been our reality for months, sometimes with multiple outages in a single week. The authorities must take these issues seriously and ensure stable electricity for residents," he said.

Residents also expressed anger over the perceived lack of initiative from their local elected representative, who they say has failed to take any meaningful steps to address the problem or question the power department over the repeated failures in the locality.

As informed by the source-

Monday's outage to a fuse failure caused by heavy rains. However, residents were upset that despite early identification of the problem, the fuse replacement took the entire day to complete.

"This delay is unacceptable," Quadros added. "If the fault was detected promptly, why did it take so long to fix a basic issue like a fuse? Such inefficiency adds to the residents' suffering."

With the monsoon season ongoing, residents fear power disruptions could become more frequent and severe. They have appealed to the electricity department to improve maintenance practices and ensure faster responses to faults.

## Margao-Panjim commuters hit by KTC bus shortage

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** A shortage of Kadamba Transport Corporation (KTC) shuttle buses left passengers at the Margao-KTC bus stand waiting for over an hour on Monday morning, causing widespread delays and frustration among daily commuters heading to Panjim and beyond. Long queues formed at the shuttle ticket counter as limited bus availability disrupted the usual morning rush hour schedule.

The bus shortage became apparent on Monday morn-



ing when expected shuttles failed to arrive on schedule. Passengers found themselves waiting for over an hour before buses became available. The delay particularly affected commuters who rely on connecting buses from Panjim to reach

other parts of Panjim or around Panjim.

One such passenger explained the cascade effect of the delays. "I usually reach my office in the morning after taking the bus from here and then another from Panjim," said Priya Naik. "Today

I was over an hour late. My entire morning schedule was disrupted." Her experience was echoed by dozens of other passengers who depend on the Margao-Panjim route as the first leg of their daily commute.

Others too pointed out that the bus delay meant they reached an hour later to Panjim and missed a portion of work in the morning, things that their higher ups may not always accept as others had reached on time and here they were delayed for no fault of theirs.

One such person was a bank employee who

lamented that this has become a recurring problem. "We depend on these buses for our daily commute, and such disruptions affect our work attendance. Plus standing in line for an hour is frustrating," he added.

The delayed commuters called for urgent deployment of additional buses on the heavily used Margao-Panjim route. They pointed out that this route is essential for people travelling to multiple destinations and pointed out that when the Margao-Panjim buses are delayed, it creates a chain reaction of delays.

## Global Konknni forum hits back at Velingkar's remarks

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** The Global Konknni Forum has strongly reacted to recent remarks by Subhash Velingkar, who criticised the demand for granting official status to the Roman (Romi) script of Konknni under the Goa Official Language Act (OLA).

In a press statement, the Forum's Secretary, Jose Salvador Fernandes, said Velingkar's statements reflect frustration over the lack of scope for elevating Mar-

athi to the same status as Konknni in Goa's language policy.

Fernandes accused Velingkar of attempting to exploit the Konknni community's demand for recognition of the Romi script, while ignoring the historical and cultural significance of the script in Goa.

He also alleged that Velingkar was trying to divide Goans along linguistic lines, after previously failing to divide them communally.

"Velingkar himself admits that the Portuguese

wrote Marathi in Roman script to cater to newly converted Goans," Fernandes noted. "This should make him appreciate the contribution of the Romi script, which also helped Marathi survive in Goa."

The Global Konknni Forum clarified that its demand to accord equal status to the Roman script alongside Devanagari is not linked to Portuguese colonial legacy, but is a bid to rectify "37 years of injustice and script-based discrimination."

