

Seafarers call for action on harassment at sea

GSAI urges sailors to speak out if they are being mistreated at the workplace— which, for months, is also home

Team Herald

MARGAO: Marking this year's Seafarers Day with a bold and urgent message, the Goan Seamen Association of India (GSAI) has called for immediate action against harassment at sea.

Announcing this year's theme "My Harassment-Free Ship," GSAI President Frank Viegas emphasised that the time has come to break the silence surrounding abuse on board ships and create a safe, respectful environment for all seafarers.

"This theme is more than a phrase — it's a call to action," Viegas said in a statement. "Harassment, whether emotional, physical, psychological, or professional, is an unfortunate reality that too many seafarers endure in silence. Today, we break that silence."

He pointed to a recent survey which revealed that 82% of seafarers feel that digitalisation — once promoted as a solution to simplify operations — has instead increased their ad-

SERVICES OFFERED BY GSAI TO MAKE 'EVERY SHIP A SAFE SHIP'

● **Legal aid and representation:** The association is partnering with maritime lawyers and international agencies to ensure access to justice for victims of workplace abuse

● **Mental health support:** Recognising the psychological toll of life at sea, GSAI is offering counselling services for seafarers struggling with trauma and isolation

● **Global partnerships:** GSAI works with international maritime organisations like the IMO, ITF, and shipowners' groups to advocate for stronger protections for Indian seafarers

ministrative burden. "Instead of reducing paperwork, technology has led to longer hours spent on digital forms, audits, and compliance tasks, often cutting into rest hours and meaningful work," Viegas added.

GSAI is taking several proactive steps to combat harassment and support seafarers. The association is partnering with maritime lawyers and international agencies to ensure access to justice for victims of workplace abuse. Recognising the psychological

toll of life at sea, GSAI is offering counselling services for seafarers struggling with trauma and isolation. GSAI continues to work with international maritime organisations like the International Maritime Organisation, International Transport Workers' Federation and shipowners' groups to advocate for stronger protections for Indian seafarers.

Viegas stressed that harassment is not a reflection of a victim's weakness, but rather a systemic failure. "The ship should be a place

of harassment, whether emotional, physical, psychological, or professional, is an unfortunate reality that too many seafarers endure in silence. Today, we break that silence. The ship should be a place of dignity and teamwork — not fear," he said.

— **Frank Viegas, President, Goan Seamen Association of India**

of dignity and teamwork — not fear," he said.

He also thanked the government of Goa for its continued support through the Seafarers' Pension Scheme, while urging the central government and the Directorate General of shipping to respond more firmly to the grievances of seafarers nationwide.

"I urge every shipping company, maritime authority, and training institution to adopt zero-tolerance policies and collaborate with unions like GSAI to ensure safer ships for all," Viegas said.

Seafarers' Welfare Scheme to be made permanent: CM

Team Herald

MARGAO: Once again, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has assured the seafarers' community that their long-pending demand to make the Seafarers Welfare Scheme permanent with an additional hike of Rs 1000, will be fulfilled — if the BJP comes to power in 2027.

Speaking at the Seafarers Day function organised by the Goan Seamen Association of India (GSAI), Sawant acknowledged the significant contributions of Goan seafarers to the state's economy and the challenges they face.

Former Chief Minister Churchill Alemao was felicitated at the function for his contributions to the seafaring community. Alemao, himself a former seaman, holds the unique distinction of being the only seafarer to have risen to the post of Chief Minister of Goa. "It is a matter of pride that a former seafarer, Churchill Alemao,



CM Pramod Sawant inaugurates the Seafarers' Day event in Margao, accompanied by NRI Commissioner Adv. Narendra Sawaikar, former Minister Churchill Alemao, and GSAI President Frank Viegas, among others

raised to become the Chief Minister of Goa. The sacrifices made by seafarers—staying away from their families for extended periods—are immense and deeply respected," said CM Sawant.

"The Seafarers Welfare Pension Scheme was initiated under the BJP government, and we are serious about making it permanent," he said.

Sawant emphasised the importance of skill development and job opportunities for seafarers, especially for the younger generation.

"We are ready to implement job-oriented schemes along with skill training, including opportunities at sea. We have always viewed the seafarers' community positively and welcome continued suggestions for improving their welfare," he added.

It is noteworthy that despite repeated assurances over the years, the government has yet to take a final decision on making the scheme permanent—a key concern that continues to cause frustration within the community.

Customer Awareness Day held at Ponda

Team Herald

PONDA: Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) organised a Customer Awareness Day on Wednesday at Kavlekar Petrol Pump, Ponda, to educate consumers about their rights.

Arun Panchwadkar, Controller of Legal Metrology; Roland Martins, Goa Can Conventor; and HPCL official Sahil Korgaonkar were present.

Roland Martins, noting Goa's initiation of Consumer Awareness Day in 1986, emphasised the importance of consumers understanding their rights and responsibilities when fuelling.

Highlighting that despite the Consumer Protection Act, many consumers lack awareness of their rights, he advised caution in digital dealings, prioritising safety, and always requesting bills.

He suggested vehicle manufacturers clearly state fuel tank capacities to prevent common short-filling complaints.

RAIN-HIT TRANSIT

BABAT TRINDADE



Commuters wade through a flooded ferry ramp at Chorao to board the river ferry, after heavy rains left the access point waterlogged

Scientists and farmers brainstorm to reclaim khazans

Team Herald

MARGAO: Can Goa's centuries-old Khazan lands be revived? That was the central question at a lively Farmer-Scientist Interface recently hosted by ICAR-Central Coastal Agricultural Research Institute (ICAR-CCARI), Goa, where farmers, scientists, and government officials came together with a shared mission: to rejuvenate these fragile coastal ecosystems and turn them into models of sustainable agriculture and agro-eco-tourism.

The gathering saw around 20 farmers from across Goa, all actively working on Khazan lands — salt-affected low-lying fields historically used for both paddy farming and aquaculture — come face-to-face with agricultural experts and policymakers. Together, they explored ways to boost productivity, manage salinity, and unlock the economic potential of these once-thriving landscapes.

Many farmers didn't hold back. They called for urgent, science-led solutions to make cultivation viable again on Khazan lands. From erratic rainfall to soil degradation and changing land-use patterns, the challenges they face are growing — and traditional methods alone are no longer enough.

"We need scientific support to survive," one farmer said. "Our Khazans are dying, and with them, a way of life." Addressing the gathering, Rajya Sabha MP Sadanand



Shet Tanavade stressed the importance of adopting modern, sustainable farming practices. He urged ICAR-CCARI to provide region-specific technical guidance to help farmers navigate the difficult terrain of coastal saline agriculture.

St Andre MLA Viresh Borkar flagged a different set of problems: bureaucracy and tangled ownership. "One of the biggest roadblocks to reviving Khazan lands is the complex ownership system — many of these lands have multiple owners, and the lack of clear titles is stalling development," he said, calling for joint efforts between departments to resolve administrative bottlenecks.

ICAR-CCARI Director Dr Parveen Kumar outlined the institute's focused research on Khazan ecosystems. "Our models are tailored for coastal salinity and local realities. The goal is to combine scientific knowledge with traditional wisdom to revive these systems," he assured.

Financial backing is also entering the equation.

Sandeep Dharkar, General Manager of NABARD Goa, said the bank is working closely with ICAR-CCARI to fund the development of robust, scientific farming models suited to Khazan lands. "We want to help build systems that are not only sustainable but economically viable," he said.

Adding a state-level perspective, Sandeep Faldesai, Director of Agriculture, Goa, reaffirmed the government's support. "The Directorate is fully committed to helping farmers restore productivity. We will be submitting concrete proposals to the government based on inputs from this interface," he assured.

A highlight of the event was a detailed presentation by Dr Gopal Mahajan, Senior Scientist (Soil Science), ICAR-CCARI. He unveiled a "scientific package of practices" specially crafted for Khazan lands — a holistic approach integrating multi-cropping systems, aquaculture, and even agro-eco-tourism to diversify income and reduce risk.

Assolna locals grapple with mosquito infestation along Sal banks

Team Herald

MARGAO: Communities living along the River Sal, particularly between Assolna and Ambelim, are contending with an unexpected spike in mosquito activity in recent days.

While the root of the issue has not yet been confirmed, several residents suspect that dense mangrove growth and the presence of bats in the area may be contributing to the increase in mosquito breeding. The problem is particularly acute during the evening hours, they say.

Responding to growing complaints, Velim MLA Cruz Silva has commissioned a private pest control agency to carry out fogging and spraying insecticide in and around Collemawaddo in Assolna. The locality, known for its fishing jetty and country craft berthing area, is among the hardest hit.

Speaking to reporters, Silva said, "Residents have observed a surge in mosquito activity, especially between 6 pm and 9 pm. There are concerns that insects from the marshy surroundings could be making their way into inhabited zones around the time bats take flight," he noted.

"Even Pedder in Ambelem has reported a similar problem. Depending on the results of the current drive, we're considering extending the same measures further along the river," Silva added.

Choked sewers outside Hospicio overflow, sully fields with sewage

Local farmers in distress; slam unplanned, faulty sewerage network that keeps destroying their crops

Team Herald

MARGAO: Overflowing sewage drains near the South Goa District Hospital have triggered alarm among local residents and farmers, as untreated wastewater continues to flood nearby fields and roads.

The incident is being called a growing public health hazard, particularly worrying as the hospital serves hundreds of patients daily.

For the farmers of Fatorda, the situation is becoming increasingly dire. Sewage water has been seeping into agricultural land, leaving large portions of the fields waterlogged and unsuitable for cultivation.

"These fields have been cultivated for generations. We depend entirely on this land for our livelihood," said Paul Fernandes, a local farmer whose family

has been farming in Fatorda for over several years. "Now, because of poor planning and negligence, we're watching our crops rot before our eyes."

— **Paul Fernandes, farmer, Fatorda**

"This is not the first time we're dealing with this issue. The entire sewerage network is unplanned. There is no proper drainage system in place. Every monsoon, it's the same story. The water carries disease, and it's affecting not just our crops but also our families' health"

— **Rosario Araujo, farmer**

has been farming in Fatorda for over several years. "Now, because of poor planning and negligence, we're watching our crops rot before our eyes."

On Tuesday morning, a group of farmers gathered near the affected area to protest against what they say is years of inaction by authorities. They held placards and shouted slogans demanding immediate re-

pairs and accountability from the Public Works Department and local authorities.

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it's affecting not just our crops but also our families' health."

The overflowing drains have also raised concerns about the safety and hygiene of the hospital premises. With stagnant sewage water collecting dangerously close to the hospital's entrance, residents fear the potential spread of diseases, especially during the monsoon season.

Locals say they have written to various departments, including the Goa State Pollution Control Board, but have yet to see meaningful action. Many believe that this issue reflects broader problems in Goa's urban infrastructure planning and sewage management.

Farmers and residents are now demanding an urgent, long-term solution that includes repairing the drains and ensuring regular maintenance.

Election for new Navelim sarpanch on July 3

Team Herald

MARGAO: After nearly three weeks without a head, the Village Panchayat of Navelim is set to elect a new Sarpanch on July 3, following an official directive issued by the Directorate of Panchayats.

The order, signed by Siddhi T Halarnkar, Director of Panchayats, comes in the wake of growing public concern over the administrative vacuum created by the resignation of the

former Sarpanch, Minguel Cardozo. He had stepped down from his position earlier this month.

The delay in initiating the process to elect a new Sarpanch had drawn criticism from a section of Navelim residents, who voiced their dissatisfaction over the lack of direction in panchayat affairs. With the post lying vacant, certain development works and administrative decisions were reportedly stalled.

Responding to these concerns, the

Directorate moved to set a date for the election meeting, which will now take place on July 3 at the Navelim panchayat office. The elected members of the panchayat will convene to vote and elect the new head.

The upcoming election is expected to be closely watched by villagers and local political observers alike, as leadership at the grassroots level plays a crucial role in addressing civic issues and implementing welfare schemes.

NABARD hosts first regional meet to boost solar power adoption in agriculture

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a move to accelerate the adoption of solar energy in Goa's agricultural sector, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Goa, recently convened the first Regional Advisory Committee meeting on the theme "Harnessing Solar Potential in Goa: Forging Stakeholder Partnerships and Community Engagement."

The meeting brought together a wide cross-section of stakeholders, including government agencies, banks, researchers, and farmers, to chart a roadmap for integrating solar technology into farming operations and fisheries across the state.

Dr Parveen Kumar, Director of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research - Central Coastal Agricultural Research Institute (ICAR-CCARI), Goa, served as Guest of Honour. He highlighted the



wide-ranging benefits of solar energy in agriculture, particularly in reducing cultivation costs and lowering carbon emissions. Dr Kumar also shared successful examples from ICAR-CCARI's own initiatives, such as solar-powered irrigation systems and solar dryers for horticultural produce, which have demonstrated tangible benefits for farmers on the ground.

Sandeep Dharkar, General Manager of NABARD Goa, welcomed representatives from various sectors and outlined the objectives of the meeting. Attendees included officials from

the Goa State Cooperative Bank, the Department of New and Renewable Energy (Government of Goa), Goa Energy Development Agency (GEDA), the Directorate of Agriculture, the State Bank of India (SBI), farmers, and other line departments.

A key highlight of the programme was the release of the Central Government's PM-KUSUM scheme guidelines, which lay out a framework for implementing solar energy systems in agricultural settings. In addition, participants unveiled a renewable energy roadmap specifically tailored to Goa's

fisheries sector, developed by MP Ensystems Private Limited.

The discussions centred on practical solutions to help farmers cut costs and enhance sustainability through clean energy. Dr Kumar's presentation reinforced the feasibility of solar technology through proven case studies already operational at ICAR-CCARI, inspiring confidence among stakeholders. Dr Sujeet Desai, Scientist (Land and Water Management Engineering) from ICAR-CCARI, was also present at the event.

By bringing together institutions from finance, research, energy, and agriculture, the Regional Advisory Committee meeting marked the beginning of a coordinated effort to drive renewable energy adoption in Goa's rural economy. The collaborative approach aims to address both the opportunities and challenges of implementing solar technology in a decentralised agricultural landscape.