

# Miscalculation? NGT orders coastal watchdog to reassess Rs 39 cr-fine

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** In a significant development that could reshape how environmental penalties are determined in India's coastal regulation zones, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Goa Coastal Zone Management Authority (GCZMA) to reassess its environmental compensation order in a multi-crore penalty case—following the authority's own admission of computational errors.

The tribunal's intervention came after a legal challenge questioning the GCZMA's jurisdiction and penalty calculation methods in a case involving a Rs 39.5 crore compensation order. The appellant argued that the penalty was disproportionately high and unsupported by statutory provisions, bringing into focus major gaps in India's existing framework for assessing environmental damage.

Central to the challenge was whether the GCZMA, as a regulatory authority under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, had the legal standing to impose such steep financial penalties. The Act itself stipulates that for each contravention, penalties "shall not be less than ten thousand rupees but which may extend to fifteen lakh rupees," a range far below the amount in question. This discrepancy formed the crux of the appellant's argument that the GCZMA's order lacked statutory grounding.

## NGT ORDERS FRESH ASSESSMENT

**The National Green Tribunal has set aside GCZMA's Rs39.5 crore penalty and directed a fresh computation within two months.**

● **GCZMA ADMITS ERRORS:** The authority acknowledged mistakes in calculating the area under violation, affecting the compensation amount

● **JURISDICTION DISPUTED:** The appellant argued that GCZMA lacked authority to impose such penalties under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

● **ONLY PART OF SITE WITHIN CRZ:** Of the 12,700 sqm site, only 3,360 sqm was within CRZ limits—raising complaints about overestimation

● **NO STATUTORY BASIS FOR FORMULA:** The formula used by GCZMA to compute the fine lacked statutory or executive



backing, according to the petitioner

● **CASE MAY SET PRECEDENT:** The ruling could reshape how penalties are calculated and enforced in future CRZ violation cases across India.

MA's order lacked statutory grounding.

A key point of contention was regulatory overreach. The petitioner pointed to Section 15(C) of the Environment (Protection) Act, which empowers adjudicating officers—not regulatory authorities—to determine penalties and compensation. By independently calculating the compensation amount, the GCZMA was seen to have bypassed this statutory mechanism, potentially undermining the central government's designated adjudication process.

Adding to this, the appellant questioned the legitimacy of the formula used to

arrive at the Rs 39.5 crore figure. "The formula, which has been relied upon by the GCZMA, has no statutory basis and that the same is not backed by any executive order and hence cannot be applied for imposing penalty under the provisions of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986," the petitioner submitted.

Geographical jurisdiction also became a flashpoint. The appellant maintained that certain activities—particularly filling work on the southern side of the site—were conducted outside the No-Development Zone (NDZ) and Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), located just

43 metres from the High Tide Line (HTL). If accurate, this would place them beyond the GCZMA's purview, raising questions about whether the penalty was imposed on areas technically outside its authority.

Crucially, the appellant flagged discrepancies in the area measurements used to calculate the compensation. While the GCZMA considered the full 12,700 square metres of the site in its computation, the petitioner claimed that only about 3,360 square metres actually lay within CRZ boundaries. This substantial difference directly impacted the scale of the violation—and, by extension, the fine

imposed.

In a notable turn, the GCZMA itself admitted to computational mistakes in determining the area under violation. This concession proved pivotal. The tribunal noted: "In view of the admission on the part of GCZMA that there appears to be some error in calculating the area and hence, they are inclined to recalculate the amount of environmental compensation, we are of the opinion that we should allow this appeal and set aside the order dated 18.12.2024 passed by GCZMA and remand the matter to GCZMA to decide afresh within a period of two months."

The tribunal also ordered that all contentions raised by the appellant remain open for consideration during the reassessment process, ensuring that both sides would have the opportunity to present their cases fully.

This ruling is expected to carry implications beyond the individual case, potentially affecting how environmental compensation is calculated and enforced in future CRZ violations across India. For now, the GCZMA has been tasked with revisiting its order and completing the reassessment within two months—a process that may determine whether regulatory authorities can continue to impose large fines independently, or if stricter legal frameworks must guide such actions moving forward.

# Rotten fish being sold illegally on Seraulim roadside



Locals allege old fish, brought from other States, are being sold by roadside vendors

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Public outrage has erupted in South Goa after rotten, low-quality fish were found being sold illegally near the Seraulim border, close to the Fatorda wholesale fish market. Acting on citizen complaints, a team led by the Deputy Collector and officials from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) conducted a surprise inspection of the area, accompanied by Benaulim MLA Venzy Viegas, who demanded immediate and strict action.

The issue came to light when local Fatorda resident Milagres Fernandes personally intervened and exposed the sale of unhygienic fish in the area. Fernandes alleged that traders were offloading visibly rotten fish and selling it to unsuspecting consumers.

"It's appalling to see fish that should be destroyed being sold openly. There is absolutely no quality check happening. This is a serious public health hazard," he told Herald.

Fernandes further alleged that some transporters bringing in fish from outside the state admitted the stock was unfit for consumption.

He also accused local authorities, including the Seraulim panchayat, of ignoring repeated complaints. "The sale is totally illegal. The local panchayat and health authorities have completely failed in their duties," he said.

According to Fernandes, this is not the first time such violations have occurred. He expressed concern that during the ongoing fishing ban, traders from outside Goa are exploiting the gap in local supply by bringing in substandard and unhygienic fish.

MLA Venzy Viegas took to social media and called for urgent intervention from the South Goa Collector.

"The unauthorized sale of unhygienic fish at Seraulim poses a serious health threat. I request the South Goa Collector to act immediately to prevent potential health outbreaks," he said.

The incident has triggered widespread concern among locals, who are demanding accountability and strict enforcement of food safety norms. Citizens are calling for regular inspections, stricter controls at the border, and immediate penalties for those violating food safety regulations.

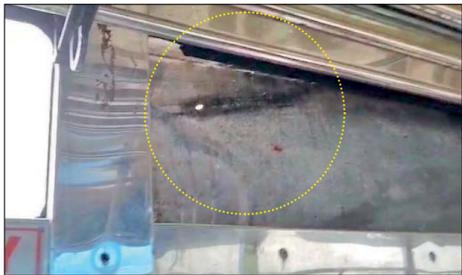
# Rainwater leaks into Margao -Panjim KTC shuttle bus

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Passengers of a KTC bus complained of rainwater entering the vehicle through a missing window pane on Thursday, prompting an NGO to threaten formal action over the deteriorating condition of public transport vehicles.

The incident occurred on KTCL bus bearing registration number GA 03 X 0552, operating on the Margao-Panjim shuttle route, where rainwater entered through a window that had been covered with a sheet of tin instead of proper glass.

The issue was reported during the Thursday morning shuttle service, with passengers expressing shock at being forced to travel in a bus that lacked basic safety and comfort standards. The makeshift tin covering failed to prevent rainwater



from seeping into the bus, causing considerable inconvenience to commuters during their journey.

GOACAN, a local NGO, documented the incident and expressed outrage over the condition of the public transport vehicle. The organisation questioned when Kadamba Transport Corporation Limited (KTCL) would take concrete steps to rectify such issues, highlighting the unacceptable state of buses

that daily commuters are forced to rely on. The NGO indicated that it would file a formal complaint, calling attention to the appalling reality that passengers must endure such conditions on what should be dependable public transport.

This is not the first time complaints have been raised about rainwater entering KTCL buses. The latest incident adds to mounting concerns over the poor maintenance of KTC buses, especially on high-traffic routes like the Margao-Panjim corridor, which serves hundreds of daily passengers. This route has also seen repeated complaints of commuters waiting in excessively long queues to board buses, amidst what passengers allege is apathy and indifference from KTCL staff when verbal complaints are raised.

# Vendors and shoppers irked as fish waste, garbage raises a stink at Margao's SGPDA retail market

**Margao civic body under fire for failing to collect garbage regularly**

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** The South Goa Planning and Development Authority (SGPDA) have voiced strong discontent over the Margao Municipal Council's (MMC) failure to act on the mounting garbage crisis at the SGPDA Retail Market.

Despite multiple written and verbal appeals, SGPDA officials claim that MMC has failed to take any concrete action, leaving vendors, customers, and authorities increasingly frustrated.

The unsanitary conditions at the retail market have reportedly worsened in recent weeks, with garbage piling up in and around the premises. The situation is particularly concerning during the monsoon season, as stagnant water and overflowing bins are creating breeding grounds for mosquitoes and increasing the risk of disease.

"This is a serious civic failure," said a senior SGPDA official. "We have sent several letters to MMC requesting immediate garbage clearance. While the market is under our management, waste



collection and disposal fall under the municipal body's responsibility. Unfortunately, there has been no proper response."

Salim Shaikh, a vendor operating at the market says the garbage problem is directly affecting their business. "We pay taxes and fees, yet the market remains in a filthy condition. Customers are avoiding the area because of the unbearable stench and unhygienic surroundings," said one frustrated vendor.

Shoppers too have raised concerns. "It's difficult to even walk through the market, let alone buy fresh produce or meat. The filth is unacceptable in a place that deals with food," said a local resident.

SGPDA officials revealed they feel helpless in addressing sani-

tation issues without municipal support. While the authority oversees market infrastructure and operations, waste management is the legal responsibility of MMC.

Notably, MMC Chairperson Damodar Shirodkar declined to comment on the issue when approached by the press.

With no solution in sight, the SGPDA is now contemplating escalating the matter to the Directorate of Municipal Administration and the South Goa Collector if prompt action is not taken.

As conditions continue to deteriorate, both vendors and citizens are demanding immediate and effective intervention to restore cleanliness, safety, and public health standards at one of Margao's most vital commercial hubs.

# HC issues notice over illegal fee waiver by TCP department

**PANJIM:** The High Court of Bombay at Goa has issued notices to the State government and four others asking them to file their affidavits within next three weeks over the plea to recover the fees illegally waived by invoking Section 17 (2) of the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Act.

The Secretary (TCP), TCP Department, Directorate of Vigilance and the Chief Town Planner (Planning) are the respondents who have been issued notices by the Court.

Activist Swapnesh Sherlekar in his writ petition had sought direction to the respondent authorities to recover the fees illegally waived by invoking Section 17 (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act on the spurious ground that 'deletion of proposed road fee is not applicable'. Arguing on behalf of the petitioner, Adv Rohit Bras De Sa told the court that the fees were waived for the properties belonging to a politician and who was benefited by the unauthorised exemption of fees.

Upon the affidavit filed by respondents, the petitioner is at liberty to file a rejoinder within a period of one week before the next date of hearing on July 24.

The petitioner has prayed that the respondent authorities be directed to maintain a record of all applications processed under Section 17 (2) of TCP Act where fees were exempted on the ground that 'deletion of proposed road fee not applicable' and to submit such records to the Court within two weeks.

# Paddy planting kicks off at Salpem Lake fields in Navelim

For decades, these fields were abandoned by farmers due to sewage contamination – until 3 years ago; this year 3 lakh sq mtrs brought under cultivation

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** The lush fields surrounding Salpem Lake in Navelim have once again come alive with activity as paddy planting begins for the third consecutive year. The initiative, spearheaded by Fr George Quadros—popularly known as the "Paddyman of Goa"—continues to embody the spirit of community collaboration, agricultural rejuvenation, and ecological care.

This year, the team has set out to cultivate nearly 3 lakh square metres of land, marking yet another milestone in their collec-



tive mission to revive the once-abandoned fields. The Salpem Lake Navelim Farmers' Union has been at

the forefront of this effort, supported by enthusiastic volunteers and local bodies. "This is more than just

farming—it's about protecting our heritage and healing Mother Nature," said Fr Quadros. "Despite

the challenges, we keep going because we believe in this land and in each other."

The revival drive has seen strong backing from the Village Development Committee of the Navelim Panchayat, the Agricultural Department (Salcete Zonal Agriculture Office), and the Goa Mechanical Cultivation Department, among others. Their support has helped sustain the momentum of the movement, said the farmer group.

It may be recalled that prior to this initiative, the fields were lying fallow for decades.

# Alarm in Raia-Rachol as bundh breaks, floods fields

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** A breach in the bundh at Rachol-Raia caused by the high tide on Wednesday led to water entering nearby agricultural fields, raising alarm among local farmers.

Responding swiftly, alert farmers from the area acted without delay, using mud to plug the breach as a temporary measure to prevent further flooding and crop damage.

Despite the setback, the farming community remains resilient, continuing their cultivation efforts with determination. Farmers have now called on local authorities to undertake



a permanent repair of the bundh to ensure long-term protection of their fields. "We've done what we could with limited resources, but a proper solution is urgently needed before the next high tide causes more

damage," said Jez Oliveira, a local farmer. The incident highlights the growing vulnerability of low-lying agricultural areas in Goa, especially in the face of changing climate and rising tidal activity.