

# Upcoming nightclub, Assagao house demolition dominate gram sabha

Panchayat blamed for "fraudulently giving" a house number to Agarwadekars

Team Herald

**ASSAGAO:** The Assagao gram sabha on Sunday thoroughly discussed and debated on three vital issues affecting the village namely the club issue, partial demolition of a house and the bad roads. Since the first two issues are before separate courts, no much discussion could take place but still the villagers did not hesitate to give vent to their feelings.

The rescheduled April gram sabha initially got delayed due to power failure and started an hour late.

After reading the minutes of the last gram sabha, Sarpanch Hanumant Naik informed the villagers about various development projects and other im-

portant issues to be taken up.

Assagao-Badem Citizens Action Committee convenor Surendra Gaad highlighted the harmful effects of the upcoming club and said that the whole village was united in opposing the club. He sought to know the latest actions of the panchayat on the issue after having made various correspondence between the committee and the panchayat and sought to also know the status of the club.

He was supported by Einstein Barretto who said that under current sections, the panchayat was duty bound to spell out its action plan. However, sarpanch Naik informed that presently all options are being explored by the panchayat and even the director of



ERWIN FONSECA

panchayat would be approached not to give any approval to the project.

Gaad also informed that the committee was pursuing its legal course along with the panchayat and now since the matter is before the director of panchayats, every attempt would be made to ensure that it gets scrapped else the higher courts would be approached. There was a heated argument be-



tween a gram sabha member Kedar Kamat and sarpanch Hanumant Naik over the Agarwadekar house demolition issue with the sarpanch declining to discuss the matter much as it was under investigation and Kamat directly accusing the panchayat of playing fraud in the case by fraudulently giving house number to Agarwadekars. Meanwhile Einstein Barreto raised

the issue of opposition to section 39A of Town and Country Planning (TCP) Act and said that under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, the panchayats were supreme and the government cannot act bypassing the panchayats and on any policy decision affecting villages such grassroot bodies should be taken into confidence. He sought a resolution to oppose this amendment.

Another issue which prominently figured was absence of water supply and bad roads. Villagers felt that to lay a new water pipeline, the PWD had dug the road and today while from the existing pipeline there was no regular water supply on the other side. It was a nightmare to drive on these potholed roads which had become accident traps.

Other major issues discussed were roadside parking, open discharge of sewerage by hotels on public roads, an illegal helipad, notifications for restricted speed limit in certain wards, stray cattle.

About the bad roads, the sarpanch informed that as a temporary measure, he would do soling of the roads through panchayat funds to make these roads motorable as even local bus operators were also refusing to ply their buses on these roads.

The Sarpanch said, "We had asked the PWD and Electricity Department to give work to the panchayat but they were not giving. Recently they have given the order. We got this order just two days back."

## Loutolim farmers to meet PWD Chief Engineer, discuss alternative alignment

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** A key meeting has been convened on Monday at Altinho- Panjim, where the farmers from Loutolim, who are opposing the ongoing land acquisition proceedings for the new high-level Borim bridge and its approach roads, will convey their grievances to the PWD Chief Engineer (CE).

### BORIM BRIDGE ROW

This meeting, scheduled for 3 pm, has been arranged by Environment Minister and local MLA Aleixo Sequeira, who is also expected to attend.

It may be that such a meeting was held last year as well, where the PWD CE had informed farmers that the department would consider finding an alternative alignment.

The farmers are opposing the selected alignment as they feel it will destroy the vast khazan fields.

Last week, they did not allow the PWD and land survey officials to carry out a demarcation exercise of the land and pointed out that the fields were under cultivation.

While an offer of compensation was made to them in the event that their fields get damaged during the demarcation exercise, the farmers are expected to take a decision after they hold a meeting with the other farmers from the village, to arrive at a consensus.

This meeting with just the farmers may take place on Tuesday. It is to be noted that the farmers have filed a petition against the bridge's alignment before the National Green Tribunal (NGT) and have appealed against the dismissal of their objections by the Land Acquisition Office.

## Opposition slams Edu Dept for 'pressurising' schools to open private bank accounts

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** The opposition in Goa has strongly condemned a circular issued by the Education Department that directs schools and educational institutions to open bank accounts exclusively with a private bank. Leader of Opposition (LoP) Yuri Alemão and Goa Forward Party (GFP) spokesperson Durgadas Kamat have demanded the immediate withdrawal of this directive, citing concerns over the government's alleged agenda to promote private banks at the expense of nationalised banks.

Yuri Alemão criticized the circular as a move to allegedly further the marketing targets of a BJP leader's wife associated with the Bank. He questioned the rationale behind the government's selective promotion of the Bank and demanded Chief Minister Pramod Sawant explain the benefits of this choice over other banks. Alemão argued that schools and institutions should have the freedom to choose their banks,

**“What is the difficulty in allowing schools and institutions to have bank accounts of their choice? Who will take responsibility if the private banks go bankrupt someday? Chief Minister Dr Pramod Sawant needs to answer these important questions – Yuri Alemão, Leader of Opposition**

warning of potential risks if private banks face financial instability.

"What is the difficulty in allowing schools and institutions to have bank accounts of their choice? Who will take responsibility if the private banks go bankrupt someday? Chief Minister Dr Pramod Sawant needs to answer these important questions," said Alemão. He emphasised that all banks, including nationalised ones, offer online transaction facilities that can support government schemes like the "Mukhyamantri

Guru Dakshina Yojana."

The GFP echoed these sentiments, with spokesperson Durgadas Kamat condemning the government's insistence on the Bank. He pointed out that this circular had been introduced before but was shelved following media exposure by GFP Vice President Dilip Prabhudesai in April 2023. Kamat suggested that external pressures from Mumbai or Delhi might be influencing the Goa government's decision.

"Why is the government obsessed with this particular bank? Is someone from Mumbai or Delhi pressurising the Goa government to force schools to open their accounts in this private bank instead of the government's own nationalized banks? We condemn the act of the government. They cannot dictate terms to aided schools/institutions on such matters," stated Kamat.

Alemão also warned the Director of Education against yielding to government pressure and issuing circulars that promote private sector banks.

## PWD urged to probe mysterious inundation of Navelim subway

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Navelim residents have called on the PWD to address persistent flooding issues in the Navelim subway near the Church junction. The inundation has caused significant inconvenience for students who rely on the pedestrian underpass.

The source of the water-logging remains unclear, with many locals suspecting a damaged water pipeline. However, PWD-Water Supply officials assert that the water seeping into the subway does not originate from their pipelines but rather from an unidentified source.

In response to residents' complaints, PWD authorities shut down the nearby water line as a precautionary measure to determine

if a pipeline was indeed the cause. Despite this action, water continued to flow into the subway, and local water pressure remained unaffected, suggesting that the pipeline was not to blame.

The PWD Water Supply division clarified that the pipe passing through the subway is not for water but rather a casing for an electric cable. This clarification has shifted the focus of the investigation.

Currently, this division has requested the PWD National Highway division to investigate the situation and identify the true cause of the water seepage. Meanwhile, locals have urged the PWD to resolve the issue promptly to restore the subway's usability for students and other pedestrians.

## Verna locals protest pollution threat to lake and fields

Issue 24-hour ultimatum to authorities to act against factory allegedly releasing wastewater onto the plateau, which flows into low-lying areas

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Residents of the Verna-Ambrol area have demanded that the Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) and other authorities take immediate action against an alleged polluting unit in their village. The unit is accused of releasing highly polluted wastewater that drains from the plateau into the village lake and fields.

On Sunday, locals gathered in large numbers at the unit to protest and seek answers to the problem. They drew parallels to the situation in Velsao, where fish were found dead after

water was contaminated by effluents from a nearby factory. The protesting locals, including activist Franky D'Mello, were upset about how their village's natural resources are getting contaminated and wanted this issue to be addressed and resolved as soon as possible. They also showed the areas where the water bodies in the village were affected due to unchecked pollution.

The protesters issued an



ultimatum, giving authorities 24 hours to stop the pollution. If no action is taken, they threaten to hold an agitation in front of the company. A member of the Verna Biodiversity Management Committee (BMC) and another Verna panch member has also assured that they will follow up on the matter.

## Tourism operators list grievances with draft Bill, seek more time to give feedback

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Stakeholders in Benaulim constituency, especially those running guest houses, have expressed concerns about the potential impacts of the draft Goa Tourism Promotion, Management and Regulation Bill 2023 on the tourism sector.

These stakeholders, requesting more time to thoroughly review the draft beyond the July 6 deadline to submit their suggestions, also highlighted various challenges they are currently facing.

The small and medium guest house operators convened with Benaulim MLA Venzy Viegas to discuss both the proposed Bill and other ongoing issues.

The group noted that

certain provisions in the draft Bill could hinder the sector's operations, putting their livelihoods at stake. They urged stakeholders statewide to examine the proposals carefully, deliberate on the possible consequences, and provide feedback to the government.

"Guest house owners are now required to register bookings online, but we have traditionally used handwritten registers. We ask the authorities to revert to the previous system," said Paul Lobo, a guest house operator.

Another operator requested that the government issue licences in August rather than November, as the current timeline effectively leaves them only four months to operate.

## Kala Rakhonn Mandd demands white paper on Kala Academy repairs

To protest on July 2; seeks a joint meeting with CM, Art and Culture Minister to discuss the issue

Team Herald

**PANJIM:** Kala Rakhonn Mandd, a newly formed organisation, has demanded a whitepaper on Kala Academy and announced that it will hold a protest outside Kala Academy on July 2, 2024.

Addressing a press conference in the city on Saturday, Kala Rakhonn Mandd Convenor Devidas Amonkar said, "We demand that the government come out with a white paper on the repairs conducted on Kala Academy with all its updates and will launch a movement on July 2 at Kala Academy."

Amonkar said, "We have demanded white paper on the repairs of Kala Acad-

**“Will seek a joint meeting of Chief Minister and the Art and Culture Minister to discuss the issue. They need to respond to our questions because the Kala Academy has been closed for almost three years – Devidas Amonkar, Convenor, Kala Rakhonn Mandd**

emy and will seek a joint meeting of Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and Art and Culture minister Govind Gaude to discuss the issue. They need to respond to our questions because the Kala Academy has been closed for almost three years."

Amonkar also said that

the organisation will carry out a technical audit of the renovation work done in Kala Academy and prepare video documentation. "The second meeting will most likely be held at Margao and the services of Charles Correa Foundation will also be roped in to explain the artistes the current situation of Kala Academy," said Amonkar.

Actor Rajdeep Naik appealed the community of artistes to start a movement for Kala Academy and raise their voice in the interest of the issues related art and culture.

Secretary Cecil Rodrigues said, "We have come out and fight to protect our Kala Academy which is world famous."

## Cavelossim P'yat seeks to review Coastal Zone Management Plan

Streamlining of permissions needed for tourism-related businesses and power outages also discussed at gram sabha

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Tourism and environmental issues took centre stage at the Cavelossim gram sabha meeting.

Amongst the many key decisions taken, was to write to the government and concerned department to ensure that the draft Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) plan is sent to the panchayat before it is officially finalised. This request came from local man Roy Barretto.

On another topic, gram sabha member and former Sarpanch Edwin Barretto suggested the panchayat streamlines the process needed for tourism-related businesses such as dropping the practice of applying for NOCs on a year-



ly-basis. While Sarpanch Dixon Vaz said that this is a complex issue given the requirement of NOCs for various permissions, he called for a special meeting to be held soon, to discuss this issue in detail with all the stakeholders concerned.

The stray dog population problem, and how it is affecting tourists and locals alike came up. Here a request was made to any villagers or starred hotels to donate a small piece of land to set up a dog shelter.

Other issues of frequent power cuts that also affect the locals and tourists as well issues facing tourism-related business were also discussed.

The sarpanch also warned locals renting their rooms or apartments without the panchayat's permission or police verification and said strict action will be taken against them as per the law.

Another resident raised concerns about the threat of dengue and malaria and called for an awareness drive to be conducted.

While the meeting ended with the passing of the audit report, the Sarpanch also touched upon the Assagao land grabbing controversy and called for the locals to remain alert.

## 5 booked for assaulting Aldona resident, family members

Team Herald

**MAPUSA:** The Mapusa Police booked five persons for assaulting an Aldona resident and his family members.

According to the police, Sradhey Narvekar, resident of Aldona, filed a complaint stating that Cheran Shirodkar, Abhishek Shirodkar, Sneha Shirodkar, Vidisha Shirodkar and Satyawar Fadte allegedly assaulted him and his family members over the issue of installation of CCTV camera at his house.

They also damaged his scooter and threatened to kill him. An offence has been registered under sections 445, 447, 427, 504, 323, 324 and 506(ii), read with 34 IPC and investigation is under process with PSI Pandhari Chopdekar.

## St Estevam villagers unite to fight against TVF's proposal to develop uncultivated khazan fields

Term intentions of non-profit organisation as 'dubious'; unanimously decide to oppose, reject in totality, the proposed so-called sustainable revitalisation plans

Team Herald

**PANJIM:** St Estevam villagers stood their ground against the proposal put forward by Third Vision Foundation (TVF) - a non-profit organization, to acquire development rights of uncultivated Khazan fields, bunds and untended sluice gates in the village.

The meeting called to create awareness about the proposal submitted at the office of Village Panchayat Jua, Comunidade (Jua & Central Zone), the Mamlatdar (Tiswadi & Ponda) and Collector (Tiswadi) by Third Vision Foundation (TVF), sought to appraise the stakeholders (Villagers, Gaunkars & Field Owners) of the proposed develop-



Architect Tahir Noronha explains the nitty gritty of the project

ments and activities to be carried out by Third Vision Foundation.

Opposing the proposal tooth and nail, the villagers demanded that no land reclamation and cultivation of the land activities, maintenance of bunds and sluices gates be allowed to Third Vision Foundation employing any practices whatsoever.

Villagers also demanded that no collaboration be established with the non-profit organization to facilitate market linkages, agroforestry and value addition in the guise of farmer empowerment, capacity building or biodiversity conservation.

The meeting held at the Casa de Povo Hall was concluded that the intentions

of 'Third Vision Foundation' were dubious and villagers unanimously decided to oppose and reject in totality, the proposed so-called sustainable revitalisation plans submitted by the non-profit organization seeking to utilize uncultivated agricultural lands and bunds along with maintenance and operation of untended sluice gates and bunds for development projects.

The meeting also decided to send copies of the objections or resolutions to the Village Panchayat (Jua), Comunidade (Central Zone and Jua), Mamlatdar (Tiswadi and Ponda) and Collector (North) to reject the proposal made by 'Third Vision Foundation' and also to file objection during the next Gram Sabha.