

Flood risks, fear of collapse cast shadow over newly opened Western Bypass

The 11 km-bypass, constructed at a cost of Rs 482 crore to ease traffic congestion in Margao and surrounding areas, has left many questioning its design and environmental impact

Team Herald

MARGAO: The commissioning of the missing link of the Western Bypass from the SGPDA wholesale fish market to Benaulim has sparked serious concerns among residents and experts regarding its environmental impact and safety. Built partially on stilts and partially on a mud embankment, the bypass runs through the floodplains of the River Sal, a region regularly inundated during monsoons.

Former MLA Radharao Gracias highlighted parallels to the Loutolim bypass, where a similar embankment collapsed and had to be rebuilt on stilts. "The entire stretch is built in the soggy floodplain of the River Sal, which gets inundated during the monsoons. The sides of the embankment are pitched with rubble stones, but that may not be enough to prevent collapse. There's a likelihood of the approach roads, particularly in Benaulim, being flooded, as this area is regularly inundated. I do not know whether these aspects were considered in designing the road," he said.

Echoing these concerns, Bharat Kamat said, "This appears to be a disaster waiting to happen. Building an embankment in a floodplain prone to monsoon inundation without sufficient con-



The Western Bypass built on embankments at Tolleabandh, a water catchment area in Benaulim



sideration of hydrological factors is risky. The collapse at Loutolim is a clear warning. Ignoring these aspects could lead to flooding, road failure, and displacement of local communities."

Orlando C S Dias, a structural engineer, said, "I live on the Navelim side of Margao, and the bypass helps avoid congested traffic. However, the construction near the Benaulim junction and Kharebandh rivulet raises concerns. During monsoons, mud roads across khazan lands are inherently vulnerable to sinking or sagging. The stretch from the Benaulim junction till the Kharebandh rivulet will likely face collapses during heavy rainfall."

Benaulim resident Rudolf Barreto linked the bypass's rushed construction to corporate interests. "This project was stuck for years until they needed a carriageway for coal. It was completed superfast, ignoring public

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"This project was stuck for years until they needed a carriageway for coal. It was completed superfast, ignoring public pleas. The embankments will harm Benaulim and upstream villages. I foresee frequent closures due to flooding and embankment failures"

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pleas. The embankments will harm Benaulim and upstream villages. I foresee frequent closures due to flooding and embankment failures," he warned.

Benaulim MLA Venzy Viegas said repeated calls for action have gone unheard. "We've raised this issue in the Assembly and during instances of flooding at Tolleabandh. Two inspections have been conducted, but no

measures have been implemented yet," he stated.

Central expert R.K. Pandey was tasked by Union Surface Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari to study the flood-prone zones after a petition by Goa Forward Party chief Vijai Sardesai, who had demanded a stilt-based design through the Tolleabandh water body in Benaulim. While Pandey rejected the stilt proposal, he recommended

comprehensive drainage measures. Pandey's report emphasized the need for de-silting and dredging the River Sal to improve its discharge capacity. It also highlighted the inadequacy of the drainage infrastructure on the Varca road, which has only two culverts, compared to the bypass's 10 culverts over a similar stretch.

"The Varca road's two culverts are insufficient for the catchment's water flow. The bypass, by contrast, has 10 culverts. Additional culverts or larger ones are needed to prevent water stagnation in the triangular area formed by the bypass, Kharebandh road, and Varca road," Pandey noted in his report.

Flooding during monsoons is routine in the River Sal floodplain. Water from the triangular area must cross the Varca road to reach the River Sal, but the existing culverts lack the capacity to

handle the flow. Residents fear that without comprehensive drainage solutions, the embankments could lead to frequent road closures, structural failures, and displacement of communities.

Pandey's recommendations included increasing the number of culverts on the Varca road, de-silting the River Sal to improve discharge capacity, and implementing a comprehensive drainage plan. However, sources indicate that while the report has been forwarded to relevant departments, no substantial action has been taken.

Orlando Dias also drew attention to the lessons learned from past mistakes, saying, "The late Chartered Civil Engineer Urbano Lobo often explained the challenges of mud embankments in khazan lands. The construction here seems to ignore these fundamentals, which could lead to serious consequences."

Pandey also observed that the bypass alignment passes through the floodplains of the River Sal, which serves as the outlet for the entire catchment area. However, during high tide, backwater flow extends to several kilometres. As the catchment area is low-lying, inundation during monsoons is almost inevitable without addressing outfall issues comprehensively.

Mollo villagers denounce DSLR hearing date

Say it deliberately clashes with Three Kings Feast

Team Herald

MARGAO: Ahead of the hearing before the Directorate of Settlement and Land Records (DSLRL) on Monday, January 6, locals from Mollo, Pale-Velsao, where ongoing double tracking works have caused upheaval and heartache, have questioned the timing of the hearing as it coincides with Three Kings Feast.

RAIL DOUBLE TRACKING

It may be recalled that since the end of November and even in the first week of January, there have been numerous clashes between the railway workers and the local residents over the scope of work and demarcation exercise.

While the government had carried out a demarcation exercise between December 20 and 21st, there were allegations by the local residents that the markers placed by the State government were moved by the railway workers.

After that, there was an issue of a toilet block, a shed, water pipeline and an age-old distillery being demolished by the railways even though the remaining formalities of the demarcation were yet to be completed and verbal instructions had been given to the railway officials to wait until the December 6 hearing.

These locals stuck to their stance after Railway officials tried to deny these charges and pointed to the continuous harassment they have been facing since the railway works began, another charge the railways tried to deny.

"The heartless SWR/RVNL abetted by the local authorities ensured that age old structures some of which were their only source of sustenance were destroyed in full public view despite a scheduled hearing on January 6, at the Court of DSLR - a date that has been cherry picked to ensure non-participation of the affected locals, being the feast of the Magi (Three Kings) where thousands converge at the hillock of Our Lady of Remedios, Cuelim"

—Orville Dourado Rodrigues, Founder, Goencho Ekvott

The latest issue has now become the date for the DSLR hearing with a majority of the locals conveying their objections to the date given that the feast is of great importance to the community, who participate in the feast in big numbers.

"Happy New Year 2025 it was supposed to be for the villagers of Mollo, Pale village. But a heartless SWR/RVNL abetted by the local authorities ensured that age old structures some of which were their only source of sustenance were destroyed in full public view despite a scheduled hearing on January 6, 2025 at the Court of DSLR, which also has been cherry picked to ensure non-participation of the affected locals, being the feast of the Magi (Three Kings) where thousands converge at the hillock of Our Lady of Remedios, Cuelim," said Orville Dourado Rodrigues, Founder of Goencho Ekvott (GE).

Candolim villagers urge VP to curb unregulated development

Want developers to follow law of the land in letter and spirit; tell civic body to withhold construction licences if they violate the rules

Team Herald

CANDOLIM: The Candolim gram sabha on Sunday appealed to the panchayat to prevent unregulated development in the village. The members voiced concerns over buildings being constructed without maintaining proper access roads and plans.

The villagers insisted that the panchayat withhold construction licences, even if plans are approved by the Town and Country Planning Department if they infringe on the rights of locals.

Residents also highlighted that many buildings lack parking facilities, forcing vehicles to occupy roadside spaces. They pointed out that some developers have converted areas designated for parking into shops and restaurants, exacerbating the parking problem.

Activist Anthony D'Souza criticised the panchayat's towing vehicle contractor for fining tourists who park on roadsides, despite the absence of no-parking signboards in the village. The

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sarpanch assured that signboards would be installed once parking and no-parking zones are notified, a process delayed by ongoing road widening work.

D'Souza also raised the issue of local buses halting arbitrarily instead of at designated bus stops, a problem he said had been brought up at previous gram sabhas but remains unresolved.

The sarpanch addressed complaints about discarded cable TV and broadband service wires hanging from

electricity poles. "We had removed some, but residents in those areas complained that their broadband internet was disconnected. We have written to the electricity department to identify which cables are no longer in use, but they have yet to act," he explained.

The sarpanch announced plans to construct a sewerage treatment plant (STP) for Candolim. "It's the need of the hour as we currently have only one night-soil tanker, which cannot meet the demand. It has to transport sewage to STPs in Panjim or Baga, which consumes a lot of time. The tanker also collects sewage from beach shacks. The new STP will exclusively handle sewage from Candolim," he said. The plant is planned to be built along the Nerul-Sinquerim river, funded by the Central government.

The panchayat also discussed the budget proposals for the financial year 2025-26. The budget outlines an expenditure of Rs 19 crore, with an income surplus of Rs 5 crore, totaling Rs 24.1 crore.

7 booked for brawl at Morjim restaurant

Police register cases against club owners, managers and staff of two restaurants

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Mandrem Police have registered an FIR against seven people, including the owners, managers, and staff of two restaurant-cum-clubs, over a dispute regarding a valid entry wrist band. The incident occurred on January 1.

According to police, Amar Khuba, 33, resident of Shaan Coco Palm Resort, Little Vithaldas Wada, Morjim, and native of Pune, Maharashtra, lodged a

complaint stating that Goa Fornia Restaurant, Morjim, Yatin Chawla, Owner of Goa Fornia Restaurant, Prayot Ghadi and Vernon (Full name not given), Manager of Goa Fornia Restaurant, allegedly assaulted him with slaps, kicks, rod and bamboo causing him bodily injuries. They also assaulted one Sanket who intervened to rescue the complainant with slaps, over the issue of entry in the restaurant.

However, Yatin Chawla, Partner of Lemon Goa Fornia

LLP, Morjim Beach, lodged a counter complaint stating that Amar Khuba, the manager of the Last Shack, Lokesh, Raj and Sanket (Full name not given) and three unidentified persons trespassed into his restaurant without valid entry pass and wrist band. When the staff asked for valid entry pass and wrist band, all accused abused Yatin and his staff in filthy words, assaulted them and threatened them with dire consequences.

Sávio Correia is Davorlim Comunidade president

Team Herald

MARGAO: Elections to the Managing Committee of Comunidade de Davorlim were held on Sunday. The elections were conducted by Derrick Pereira, UDC in South Goa Collectorate along with Ubaldina Rodrigues (Escrivão). The following were declared elected: President: Sávio Joaquim Filipe Correia, Attorney, Celestino A B de Noronha, Treasurer Gino de Piedade Collaço. They defeated the oppos-



ing panel of Leoncio Raikar, Roshal Fernandes (sitting President) and Fatima Rocha by margin of 14 votes (56 - 42). The following were declared elected un-

opposed as substitutes: President: Mervin J. R. Leopoldo Cruz. Attorney Substitute: Silvestre Niasso. Treasurer Substitute: Joao Bush Miranda

MAX. TEMP 33.7 °C
MIN. TEMP 19.8 °C

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No, I'm just a contractor, he's our lineman

State-level workshop on tourism transformations

Team Herald

PANJIM: The PG Department of Commerce (M.Com) at Government College of Arts, Science, and Commerce, Quepem-Goa, in collaboration with the Directorate of Higher Education, Government of Goa, will organise a one day State-level workshop on "Tourism Transformations: Fostering Sustainable Entrepreneurial Ecosystems", on January 10. The workshop will emphasise the transformative role of tourism in creating employment and fostering entrepreneurship in Goa.

Subhash Phal Desai, Minister of Social Welfare will be the chief guest, while Bhushan

The workshop will emphasise the transformative role of tourism in creating employment and fostering entrepreneurship in Goa

Savoikar, Director of Higher Education will be the guest of honour.

Gavin Dias, General Manager (Hotels, Marketing, NTS, O&M & IT), Goa Tourism Development Corporation will be the keynote speaker

The workshop is structured into three technical sessions: Session 1 and Session 2 will be for Research Paper Pres-

entations on exploring the relationship between tourism and entrepreneurship focusing on sustainable practices that drive economic growth and community development in Goa, followed by final Session 3 of Panel Discussion on current trends, challenges, and opportunities in the tourism sector, being an interactive session with firsthand perspectives from seasoned professionals, highlighting the importance of collaboration in addressing real-world challenges and identifying sustainable solutions. Structured sessions will be chaired by notable professionals from the tourism and hospitality sectors.

CCP issues eviction orders to five shops in Panjim market

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Corporation of the City of Panjim (CCP) has decided to crack the whip on illegal occupiers in the Panjim Municipal Market and has issued eviction orders to five shops for failing to renew lease agreements.

"The hearing is on and we have issued eviction notices to five shop owners. However, they have challenged the matter in the High Court but have been directed to approach the District Court. The Court has however provided them with a relief of 90 days," a senior official

of the CCP told O Herald. He pointed out that the CCP building was old and it has to be demolished.

In December 2023, the Corporation had issued notices to seven shopkeepers for failing to renew lease agreements.

In the notices issued, then CCP Estate Officer Victoria Maria Gonsalves had asked the shopkeepers to appear before her in person or through a duly authorised representative capable of answering all material questions connected with the matter along with the evidence in support of the cause before her personal hearing.

PRAYER TO VIRGIN MARY
(Never known to fail)

O most beautiful flower of Mount Carmel fruitful vine, splendour of Heaven, Blessed Mother, of the son of God, Immaculate Virgin assist me in my necessity. O star of the Sea help me and show me herein you are my Mother.
O, Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth. I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart to Succour me in this necessity (Make your request).
There are none that can withstand your power. O show me, My Mother. O show me herein you are my Mother. O Mary conceived without sin pray for us who have recourse to thee (3 times).
Sweet Mother I place this Cause in your hands (3 times).
Thank you for your Mercy towards me and my loved ones. Amen.
The prayer must be said for three days and after that the request will be granted and the prayer must be published.