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## Panchayat faces heat over Old Goa encroachments

Petitioner says commercial activities still on; HC seeks action-taken report

Team Herald

**PANJIM:** The Old Goa heritage area may be one of Goa's most treasured historical zones, but getting illegal encroachments removed from the UNESCO World Heritage Site is proving more difficult than it should be.

The Se Old Goa Village Panchayat has stated in the High Court that it has issued show-cause notices to the occupants of unauthorised structures and halted commercial activities, but the petitioner has disputed the local body's claim, asserting that such activities continue unabated.


The High Court of Bombay at Goa has now directed the village panchayat to submit an affidavit-in-reply within a week.

The public interest litigation (PIL) writ petition, filed by John Baptista Mascarenhas, seeks action against illegal encroachments and commercial activities in the prohibited zones surrounding the world heritage monuments at Old Goa.

During the hearing, the village panchayat's counsel, Sahish Mahambrey, informed the Court that notices had been served to the occupants of unauthorised structures, instructing them to immediately cease

**CLAIMS & COUNTER-CLAIMS**

- The Panchayat's counsel informed the Court that notices had been served to the occupants of illegal structures
- Claimed that occupants were instructed to cease all unauthorised activities and asserted that commercial activities were stopped
- The petitioner's counsel maintained that commercial operations were still on



■ High court noted that the petitioner's concerns would be addressed after the panchayat files its affidavit-in-reply and an action-taken report, within the stipulated time frame

all unauthorised activities. He further claimed that commercial activities had been stopped.

However, the petition-

er's counsel, Adv Parag Wagle, contested this statement, maintaining that commercial operations were still ongoing

from these premises.

A division bench comprising Justice M S Karnik and Justice Nivedita P Mehta noted that the petitioner's concerns would be addressed after the village panchayat files its affidavit-in-reply, accompanied by an action-taken report, within the stipulated time frame.

Previously, a survey report by the Tiswadi Mamlatdar identified 54 illegal structures within the prohibited areas at Old Goa, some of which were reportedly being used for commercial purposes.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

## Haryana BJP chief, singer Rocky booked for gangrape

**PTI, SHIMLA/CHANDIGARH:** Haryana BJP chief Mohanlal Badoli and a singer were booked after a woman alleged that she was gang-raped by them in a hotel in Kasauli. Himachal Pradesh Police has registered an FIR against the two men, officials said on Tuesday.

PTI reached out to Badoli but no response was received.

According to the complainant, the two men made videos of the act and threatened to kill the victim if she disclosed the incident to anyone, they said.

The FIR registered in Kasauli in Solan district on December 13, 2024, names Badoli and Jai Bhagwan alias Rocky. A copy of the FIR was doing the rounds on social media on Tuesday.

According to the FIR, the woman was staying in a hotel in Kasauli with her boss and friend when they met the two accused on July 3, 2023. While Badoli introduced himself as a political leader, Rocky introduced himself as a singer.

Later, the woman and her friend went into a room with the two accused, who promised to help the complainant get a government job and a chance to feature in a music video, the FIR said.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

## Kerala horror: 44 nabbed for athlete's rape

**PTI, PATHANAMTHITTA (KERALA):** The special investigation team (SIT) of Kerala police probing the sensational case of alleged sexual abuse of a Dalit girl in the district has arrested 44 people so far in connection with the matter, a senior police officer of the district said on Tuesday.

DIG S Ajeetha Begum, who is overseeing the investigation, said that 30 FIRs have been registered in connection with the alleged sexual assault of the girl and out of the 59 accused mentioned in the cases, 44 have been arrested.

"Two of the accused are absconding. They are abroad at present. We are considering issuing Look out Circulars for them. We are also planning to issue a Red Corner notice for them through Interpol," the officer told TV channels.

Besides them, 13 more have to be arrested, she said.

"We are searching for their locations. They will be arrested soon. A foolproof and scientific investigation will be carried out by the SIT. We will not spare any of the accused. There will be no compromise. We will bring all of them before the law," the officer said.

The investigation so far has revealed that several of the accused met the girl at a private bus stand in Pathanamthitta. She

### CASE DETAILS



► 44 individuals arrested so far

► 59 accused in total; 2 are abroad and absconding, 13 others yet to be arrested

► Look Out Circulars and Red Corner Notices being considered

► 30 FIRs registered

► SIT comprises over 30 officers, including women officers

► The girl was gang-raped on at least five occasions since she was 13 years old

► The case came to light during counselling by the Child Welfare Committee after teachers noticed behavioural changes in the girl

was then taken to various locations in vehicles and subjected to abuse, police said.

The probe also found that the girl, while she was studying class XII last year, was taken by a youth who was acquainted with her through Instagram to a rubber plantation in Ranni, where he raped her along with three others.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

## TRIAL BY FIRE



A man leads a cow to jump across a burning haystack during an annual ritual to exorcise evils on the Makar Sankranti festival in Bengaluru, on Tuesday

## Kate Middleton says her cancer is in remission

**AGENCY, LONDON:** Kate, the Princess of Wales, announced Tuesday that her cancer is in remission, less than one year after announcing her diagnosis.

The 43-year-old princess shared the update in a statement on X, writing, "It is a relief to now be in remission and I remain focused on recovery."

"As anyone who has experienced a cancer diagnosis will know, it takes time to adjust to a new normal. I am however looking forward to a fulfilling year ahead," she wrote, in part. "There is much to look forward to. Thank you to everyone for your continued support."

Cont on Pg 11 >>

## Parl panel to summon Meta over poll remarks

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** Seeking an apology from social media giant Meta for "tarnishing" India's image, BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, who heads the Parliament's Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology, said on Tuesday that the panel will summon the firm following its chairman's comments that India's ruling dispensation lost the Lok Sabha election last year.

"My committee will summon Meta for this incorrect information. Incorrect information about any democratic country tarnishes its image. This organisation (Meta) will have to apologise to the Indian Parliament and the people here for this mistake," Dubey said in a post on X.

He was reacting to Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw's criticism of

Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg for making a "factually incorrect" statement that the incumbent government in India lost the election in 2024 over issues arising out of the pandemic.

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## HIGHWAY EXPANSION AT PORVORIM

## Translocated trees fighting for survival, claims activist

Blames Doctor Trees for hasty translocation, mishandling of the process

Team Herald

**PANJIM:** In a scathing critique of the state government's actions, concerned citizens have condemned the destruction of trees during the construction of the elevated corridor at Porvorim. The backlash follows an affidavit filed by Telangana-based Doctor Trees India Private Limited before the High Court of Bombay at Goa, detailing the measures taken to protect three translocated trees.

Activist Avertino Miranda voiced his outrage, calling the translocation of five aged trees – including two banyan trees – as part of the ongoing six-lane elevated corridor project a "disastrous" move. He alleged that one of the translocated trees



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