

Santa Cruz vows to protect Bondvol Lake as real estate threat looms

Team Herald

SANTA CRUZ: Villagers of Santa Cruz and petitioner Arturo D'Souza have issued a stern warning to real estate developers, urging them to withdraw their attempts to concretise the periphery of Bondvol Lake or face a significant public outcry. The 110-year-old lake, declared a wetland and biodiversity hotspot in October 2022, continues to be at the centre of controversy for years.

Residents were shocked when dense tree cover on the hillside surrounding the lake was recently cleared, allegedly by real estate companies that have purchased plots in the area. These companies have approached the High Court to request a reduction in the lake's buffer zone from 200 metres to 50 metres.

Petitioner Arturo D'Souza, who has been spearheading the battle against the encroachment, cited a 2016 High Court directive by Justice Gautam Patel that mandated the maintenance of a 200-metre buffer zone around the lake. "The High Court order still stands. The real estate companies are assuming they will win, but we will not allow this," he said.



“The High Court order still stands (reg the 200-metre buffer zone). The plots in the land which is in the buffer zone of the lake raises several questions, did the Directorate of Survey and Land Records (DSLRL) Panchayat and the Town & Country Planning (TCP) Department not know about the HC ruling?”

— Arturo D'Souza, activist

The Bondvol Lake dam, built by the Portuguese to combat famine, remains a critical resource, recharging wells and supporting thousands of farmers in the area. D'Souza questioned government bodies such as the Directorate of Survey and Land Records, the Panchayat, and

the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Department, asking how plots could have been sold within the protected buffer zone despite the court's ruling.

Former Deputy Sarpanch and present panch, Inacio Dominic Pereira vowed to oppose any harm to the



PICS: SAGUN GAWADE

“The matter is subjudice. But there is one more company that has cut land and destroyed a green patch. An FIR has been filed against this. We will gather people and come out on the streets if this doesn't stop”

— Inacio Dominic Pereira, panch, St Cruz

“Our administration is also known for corrupt personnel, who issue permissions, against set laws. These corrupt personnel must be weeded out in the open and their gross assets over legal income, questioned. Until and unless every villager/citizen rises as an individual with a strong spine, backed by all others, our villages shall be vast tracts of concrete laden graveyards”

— Sanjeev Sardessai, historian

lake, saying, "If these activities don't stop, we will take to the streets. An FIR has already been filed against one company for destroying a green patch."

Heritage promoter Sanjeev Sardessai strongly criticised corrupt officials allegedly granting illegal

permissions, calling for their assets to be scrutinised. "Bondvol Lake is a treasured heritage site. We cannot let greed destroy such a vital natural asset," he stated.

Sarpanch of Santa Cruz, Jenifer Oliveira, was unavailable for comment, but she had earlier stat-

BIODIVERSITY AT RISK

■ Bondvol Lake has a 12.14 metre-high and 180 metre-long catchment area. It is an earthen dam built by the St Cruz (Calapor) Comunidade during the Portuguese era

■ The lake is a home to at least 18 species of birds and wild animals and has been visited by 105 species of birds over the last century.

■ The lake and its periphery houses over 100 species of forest trees and shrubs

ed to local media that the Panchayat had inspected the site and referred the matter to the Deputy Collector for action.

Santa Cruz MLA Rodolfo Fernandes assured his support for the villagers, emphasising his commitment to protecting Bondvol Lake.

The lake, seen as a symbol of environmental and cultural heritage in the region, remains a rallying point for community action as residents unite against encroachment and environmental degradation.

Technical glitch in GMC computers leave patients queueing up for hours



Patients waiting outside the pharmacy



Patients waiting to register outside the OPD

Team Herald

PANJIM: Serpentine queues were observed at the OPD registration counters of Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMC), Bambolim, on Friday morning due to a server failure that disrupted online systems.

Patients and their relatives, including many who had travelled long distances and waited days for doctor appointments, were forced to stand in line for hours. The disruption created significant delays, with queues lasting until the afternoon. An estimated 1,500 patients

visit the hospital's OPD daily. Despite the setback, hospital staff resorted to offline registration to ensure services continued.

Commenting on the issue, Health Minister Vishwajit Rane clarified that the server failure was not due to any error by GMC staff.

"Such an issue has never occurred at GMC before. It is not the fault of the staff," he stated.

He added that GMC's upcoming Health Management Information System (HMIS) would enhance patient management and reduce paperwork once implemented.

THE RIVER PROVIDES

VINCENT BRAGANZA



A local villager flings his fishing net locally known as 'pagear' hoping for a catch from his canoe in the river Mandovi at Vanxim island near Diwar on Wednesday.

Panchayat Secretary suspended for allegedly outraging modesty of woman

Team Herald

PANJIM: Usgao-Ganjam Panchayat Secretary Honaji Morajkar was suspended with immediate effect following a complaint of outraging of modesty filed against him by a 22-year-old woman from Valpoi.

An order to this effect was issued by Panchayat Director Siddhi Halarankar on Friday.

The woman had filed a complaint with Ponda police against 55-year-old Honaji from Sakhal and the Ponda police had booked him under sections 78(2), 75(2), 75(3) and 79 of BNS 2023.

In an order, the Panchayat Director said, "It is further directed that during the period of his suspension in force, the Village Panchayat Secretary Honaji Anil Morajkar of Village Panchayat Usgao Ganjam, Ponda, Block, shall report to the office of Block Development Office, Ponda, and will not leave the headquarters without obtaining the permission of this authority."

However, the Panchayat Secretary shall be enti-

tled to subsistence allowances as admissible, the order said.

Earlier, Panchayat Minister Mauvin Godinho said that file has been moved to suspend the Panchayat Secretary.

The Ponda police on January 14, registered a case against the Usgao-Ganjam panchayat secretary for allegedly outraging the modesty of a 22-year-old woman from Valpoi

"We are taking action against the particular secretary. Such things cannot be tolerated in the government. We have already moved the file to suspend him," he told the reporters at BJP headquarters in the city.

However, the Opposition Congress lambasted the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led government for not protecting women in spite of coining the slogan 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao'.

Addressing a press conference along with the vic-

tim, Goa Pradesh Congress Committee General Secretary Manisha Usgaonkar said, "When the government says Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, why action is not being taken in case? Why did the Panchayat minister not take action? The BJP government is known for double standard practices."

Usgaonkar said that if the victim is not given justice by the Department of Panchayat then the Congress party members along with the victim and her family members will protest at Department of Panchayat.

The Ponda police on January 14, registered a case against the Usgao-Ganjam panchayat secretary for allegedly outraging the modesty of a 22-year-old woman from Valpoi.

The day after the complaint was lodged, the accused went on sick leave and filed an anticipatory bail application, which the court accepted, granting him interim relief. He was granted interim relief on his anticipatory bail application on January 16, 2025.

Cable TV providers petition HC to save wires from power dept

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Cable TV Networking and Service Providers Association of Goa (CNSPAG) has filed an application before the High Court of Bombay at Goa, requesting a directive for the Electricity Department to halt its operations of cutting and clearing wires attached to electricity and streetlight poles. This application was submitted as the power department began pulling down internet cables in South Goa.

Department staff commenced the removal of internet wires from electricity poles in South Goa, with linesmen, assisted by Executive Engineer Kashinath Shetye, initiating the action in the Aquem areas on Friday. Department officials have stated that only the wire bunches, which were installed haphazardly and were making the poles unstable, were removed. The Department also reminded that despite multiple notifications, the operators failed to remove the wires.

The operators have been given a new deadline of January 31, to either remove their wires from the poles or pay the Department for the necessary costs to cut or disconnect them.

Meanwhile, after the Department of Information and Technology, the CNSPAG has also raised concerns. The parent association has now filed an application before the High Court, seeking relief to ensure uninterrupted internet and cable TV connectivity until the pending hearing and

final disposal of a petition being heard before the court. The hearing is scheduled for Wednesday. Reports indicate that several government offices, corporate offices, and cable TV channels operating on Internet Protocol (IP)

have been experiencing connectivity issues after cables were cut. However, the Department remains firm in its stance, claiming that the wires pose a danger to the public and the power supply infrastructure in Goa.

power shutdown

BICHOLIM: On January 19 from 9 am to 3 pm neat Court, Bicholim Municipal Council, Naik petrol pump, Sunderpeth, Mamlatdar Office, Our Lady of Grace Maternity Hospital and surrounding areas.

CUNCOLIM: On January 20 from 9 am to 2 at Khaddem and Kajuwada of VP Balli and total wards coming under the jurisdiction of VP Padi – Barcem at Cuncolim.



Directorate of Food and Drugs Administration
Government of Goa



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