

Govt's plan to declare Divar as tourism village comes under fire

Villagers vehemently oppose Tourism Dept's move to set up eco-tourism project

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Goltim-Navelim (Piedade) gram sabha on Sunday vehemently opposed the Tourism Department's decision to declare Divar as a tourism village and rejected the government's plans to set up eco-tourism project in the village.

The Gram Sabha unanimously opposed the proposed mega housing projects on the island.

"Tourism is required but with limitations. We cannot outright say we reject tourists. There are many business establishments which will not function if there are no tourists," said Sarpanch Mario Pinto.

Former sarpanch Prasad Harmalkar said there were tourists flocking to Piedade



“Tourism is required but with limitations. We cannot outright say we reject tourists. There are many business establishments which will not function if there are no tourists
- Mario Pinto, Divar Sarpanch

even when it was not declared as a tourism village.

"Tourists are still coming because there is a five star hotel here and other beautiful places around. However

“The moment you declare a tourism village then it must have some infrastructure which we don't. Water trickles into our taps once in two days while power supply is erratic. The roads are very narrow and not suitable for large vehicles. We are already facing issues with ferry services as well
- Prasad Harmalkar, Former sarpanch

we don't want Divar to be declared as a tourism village," Harmalkar said.

Speaking to **O Herald**, Harmalkar said, "The moment you declare a tourism

village then it must have some infrastructure which we don't. Water trickles into our taps once in two days while power supply is erratic. The roads are very

narrow and not suitable for large vehicles. We are already facing issues with the ferry services as well."

The gram sabha also discussed the issue of inunda-

tion of fields by saline water and housing projects. Members demanded that any project having more than ten flats with swimming pools should not be given permission.

It is pertinent to note that the State government had floated a tender for the development, operation, and maintenance of eco-tourism project on 7,697sqms of land owned by the Tourism Department in September last year. The project with 20 Swiss cottage tents or eco-cottages, or a mix of both, is proposed to be set up on the Divar hillock in close proximity to a church, cemetery and temple.

The gram sabha was held after the High Court of passed an order directing the Village Panchayat to hold the meeting.

SC likely to hear Mhadei matter on Jan 23

Team Herald

PANJIM: Supreme Court is likely to hear the Mhadei river matter on Thursday, January 23.

Special leave petitions have been filed in the apex court by the three-riparian States- Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra, along with the contempt pleas filed by the coastal State.

According to sources, Court has listed the matter on January 23 in Court No 1 for hearing.

The matter had come up before the Supreme Court in November, last month, after almost nine months. However, it was posted for January without hearing.

All the three States have filed additional written submissions before the Court, as directed during the previous hearing held in February last year. Earlier, the matter was heard in July, 2023.

The Court had also asked the three neighbouring States to nominate a nodal counsel for the bookmarking of the convenience compilations and that during the course of arguments.

The three States - Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra- have filed Special Leave Petitions in the court challenging the Mhadei Distribute Tribunal Award made in August 2018.

Calangute police arrest 24 including touts

Team Herald

CALANGUTE: Continuing their crackdown on illegal activities along the Calangute-Candolim beach belt, Calangute police on Friday booked 24 individuals, including five for touting, 11 for creating a public nuisance, and eight for begging.

"Calangute police have been actively targeting touts. This crackdown on illegal activities is aimed at safeguarding the interests of tourists and to ensure that tourists leave Calangute with fond memories, free from nuisance," the police said.

Sonsoddo faces another setback as shredding machines fail

Team Herald

MARGAO: The recently inaugurated coconut husk shredding machine at the Sonsoddo dump yard has already malfunctioned, prompting widespread frustration among citizens who are criticising the apparent misuse of public funds and poor management by the Margao Municipality.

The issue came to light on the same day a fire broke out at the Sonsoddo dump yard, further intensifying concerns among local residents.

Both the coconut husk shredding machine and a garden waste shredder, which were installed over a year ago, were part of a broader initiative aimed at addressing the growing problem of garden and coconut shell waste in the Margao.

However, with both machines now out of service, waste continues to accumulate at the site, leading to mounting complaints from residents about the lack of action from the authorities.

Reacting to the issue, Savio Coutinho, former chairperson of the Margao Municipal Council (MMC) and Congress leader, expressed his frustration with the situation. He accused the civic body of squandering public money, pointing out that the failure of the machines has led to waste piling up not only at Sonsoddo but across all 25 wards in the municipality.

Coutinho alleged that, in a bid to handle the

Both the coconut husk shredding machine and a garden waste shredder, which were installed over a year ago, were part of a broader initiative aimed at addressing the growing problem of garden and coconut shell waste in the Margao municipal area

overflow of waste, the civic body has resorted to setting it on fire, causing severe environmental pollution and posing health risks to nearby residents, including schoolchildren.

He further added, "At present, nothing much is happening at the Sonsoddo dump yard. The waste management system is in complete disarray, and no one seems to be taking responsibility for the situation."

Custodio Fernandes, a resident of Borda, also voiced his concerns, accusing the civic body of failing on all fronts with regard to waste management. "The non-functioning of the coconut and garden waste shredding machines at Sonsoddo proves that the authorities are least concerned about the issue. These machines should have been repaired immediately to ensure regular waste disposal," Fernandes said.

As the waste management situation continues to worsen, residents and local leaders are calling for immediate intervention and a comprehensive plan to address the mounting waste crisis at Sonsoddo.

GOLDEN ENDEAVOUR



Fishermen prepare their mini ramponn to cast during sunset at Morjim beach

Cavellossim's River Sal project stalled amidst clearance delays

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Cavellossim Village Panchayat has expressed growing frustration with the authorities over the prolonged delay in reviving the retaining wall project at the mouth of the River Sal in Betul.

A delegation led by Dixon Vas, Cavellossim Sarpanch, recently met Environment Minister Aleixo Sequeira to discuss the pressing need to revive the project and address its ongoing delays.

The ambitious project, initially proposed several years ago, aims to construct a breakwater facility that would ensure a navigable channel at the river mouth. However, the project was halted after

opposition from the Cavellossim Villagers Forum.

In 2017, the forum took the matter to the National Green Tribunal (NGT), which ultimately gave its approval for the project in November 2021. The NGT's approval, however, was conditional on the government first obtaining the necessary Environment Clearance (EC) before proceeding with the project's execution. Additionally, the NGT directed the restoration of land at Cavellossim.

Despite over four years having passed since the NGT disposed of the petition filed by the Cavellossim Villagers Forum, the required Environment Clearance has not yet been secured,

and no further progress has been made on the project.

Dixon Vas emphasised the ongoing challenges caused by the lack of action. The current state of the river mouth has severely impacted local fishing operations, particularly at the Cutbana fishing jetty, as well as water sports activities and other boating ventures. The heavily silted navigational channel has created a risk of boats running aground.

While Minister Aleixo Sequeira assured the Panchayat that the government is not opposed to reviving the retaining wall project, he reiterated that work would commence once the necessary reports are finalised and the required clearances are obtained.

Activist sounds alarm over illegal paragliding at Colva

Concerns grow over the illegal activity following fatal Keri accident

Team Herald

MARGAO: In the wake of the tragic deaths of a tourist and a pilot in a paragliding accident at Keri, a resident of Colva has raised serious concerns about the ongoing illegal paragliding activities at Colva beach.

Simao Rodrigues, a long-time activist opposed to these operations, expressed his frustration with the authorities' lack of action and warned that, if left unchecked, a similar incident could soon occur at Colva.

Speaking to **O Herald**, Rodrigues, who has been campaigning against illegal paragliding for several years, said, "It's only a matter of time before something like this happens at Colva beach. Despite numerous reports and complaints to the authorities, illegal paragliding activities continue unchecked. The situation is dire, and public safety is at great risk."

The tragic accident, which occurred on January 18, claimed the lives of Shivani Dabale and Suman Nepali after a paragliding cable snapped mid-flight. The incident has raised significant concerns about the safety of such activities and the lack of proper regulations.

Rodrigues commented, "This is a shocking tragedy, and it could have been prevented. We are witnessing illegal paragliding with no safety measures in place, putting not only tourists but also the residents of Colva in danger."

He also highlighted that the Colva village panchayat had previously addressed the issue, passing a resolution against such activities. In November 2024, the panchayat even wrote to the Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC),

“It's only a matter of time before something like this happens at Colva beach. Despite numerous reports and complaints to the authorities, illegal paragliding activities continue unchecked. The situation is dire, and public safety is at great risk. I have been fighting against this nuisance for over two years now. Yet, despite objections from the community and authorities, motorized paragliding continues at Colva beach
- Simao Rodrigues, Colva resident

urging them to stop issuing NOCs or permissions for motor-powered paragliding in Colva.

The letter cited the risks associated with these activities, including low-altitude flights, mechanical failures, and noise pollution from the motors. However, despite these warnings, no substantial action has been taken to resolve the issue.

"I have been fighting against this nuisance for over two years now. I even warned Tourism Minister Rohan Khaunte about the risks, especially after the incident at Keri. Yet, despite objections from the community and authorities, motorized paragliding continues at Colva beach," Rodrigues added. He further said, "The authorities have failed to take any meaningful action, and the safety of both residents and tourists remains in jeopardy."

As the issue continues to escalate, local residents and activists are demanding immediate intervention to halt illegal paragliding activities at Colva beach and ensure the safety of all those visiting the popular tourist destination.

Sacorda villagers demand tarring of muddy road for development

Many farmers have abandoned plans to develop cashew plantations due to transportation difficulties

Team Herald

PONDA: The lack of proper road connectivity in a section of Sacorda village has left residents frustrated, as they feel it has stalled development in the area. Villagers have long been demanding the construction and tarring of the Sacorda Aglot via Tale Advan Road, a 1.5 km muddy and uneven stretch. If completed, the road would significantly benefit both farmers and residents.

The existing road conditions have severely limited the transportation of modern agricultural machinery to the area, making it difficult for farmers to utilise their land effectively.

Mahadev Shetkar, a panch member of Sacorda Village



Panchayat, emphasised the need for immediate action. "Local Sanvordem MLA Ganesh Gaonkar has initiated several development projects, but this crucial road remains neglected. The Chief Minister's office

had instructed authorities to begin the work a year ago, and an inspection by the panchayat and PWD officials was conducted. Despite an estimated cost of Rs 1.5 crore, no progress has been made," Shetkar said.

He also alleged that certain anti-social elements are playing politics over the issue and opposing the road construction, hampering efforts to address farmers' concerns. "These people will not face any losses, but farmers stand to benefit immensely from a tarred

road," he added.

Locals noted that agricultural potential in the area, such as cashew plantations, remains untapped due to the lack of proper road connectivity. Many farmers have abandoned plans to develop cashew plantations because of transportation difficulties.

Villagers also highlighted that a tarred road would benefit not just farmers but also residents of Kumbharwada and surrounding areas, improving accessibility and infrastructure.

The farmers and locals have urged the government to prioritise the tarring of the Sacorda Aglot via Tale Advan Road and provide much-needed support for rural development.

Locals demand safety measures after accident on Farmagudi Highway

Team Herald

PONDA: Two women were injured in an accident on Saturday at Farmagudi while travelling towards Ponda on a scooter at a road-widening worksite for the Farmagudi four-lane highway.

The incident occurred due to confusion caused by machinery movement at the site. According to locals, the scooterist panicked when a piece of heavy machinery, presumed to be a JCB, reversed on the highway. Believing it might hit her scooter, she abruptly applied the brakes, causing her and the pillion rider to fall onto the roadside.

Social worker Premanand Gaude pointed out that road widening along the Ponda-Farmagudi highway is in progress on both sides, resulting in a narrowed pathway for vehicles. Gaude added, "Farmagudi is an education hub, with thousands of students commuting during rush hours in the morning. The narrowed roads and ongoing work demand immediate safety

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measures like red flags and sufficient cautionary signboards."

Locals emphasised the urgent need for improved safety measures at the site, including visible work-in-progress signboards and red flags to alert commuters about the dug-up areas and ongoing construction. With Farmagudi being a high-traffic area, and the road's slope adding to its risks, these precautions are deemed essential.

As the road-widening work involves significant excavation for the construction of a retaining wall, residents believe enhanced warnings could prevent future accidents and ensure the safety of road users.

Chodan-Madel gram sabha opposes mega projects

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Chodan-Madel gram sabha on Sunday unanimously resolved to oppose mega projects in its jurisdiction.

The village panchayat resolved that the commercially and environmentally destructive project which comes under the guides of eco-tourism projects and residential complexes should not be permitted.

Only single dwelling of units within the settlement zones should be permitted, the resolution passed by the gram sabha said.

The gram sabha also resolved that no permission should be given for borewells and swimming pools even for single dwelling houses. It also resolved that license, permission and NOC for commercial residential projects should not be issued by the panchayat body unless the same have been discussed and approved by the Gram Sabha.

The gram sabha also resolved that the panchayat elected by the people will work in the interest of the village for the preservation of the village from unsustainable development.

Later, speaking to reporters, Sarpanch Silvano Pereira said, "We have decided not to issue any construction license to any outsider from our end even if they get approval from other departments."