

Loliem-Polem rejects Film City on eco-sensitive Bhagwati Plateau

Villagers want NOC withdrawn immediately, vow to move High Court

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a show of unity against a proposed Film City project, the Loliem-Polem gram sabha demanded the immediate withdrawal of the No Objection Certificate (NOC) issued by the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Department for the project on the Bhagwati plateau.

The locals demanded that the panchayat act decisively to protect the ecologically sensitive area (ESA) and uphold past resolutions rejecting non-traditional uses of plateau land.

The controversy centers around Survey No. 63/1, where the Film City and allied infrastructure are planned to be developed over 10 lakh sqms of land.

The villagers highlighted that resolutions passed in 2016 and 2023 already prohibited non-traditional uses of the plateau. They described the issuance of the NOC on October 14, 2024, as a breach of these resolutions. Similarly, they condemned the affidavit submitted by the Comunidade of Loliem-Polem as a violation of the community's rights and interests.

By a majority vote of 44 to 16, the gram sabha resolved that the panchayat write immediately to relevant authorities, including the TCP Department, the Comunidade, and the Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG), demanding the cancellation of the NOC and any related lease deeds.

The resolution stated that if the authorities fail to act within 15 days, the panchayat will take the matter to the High Court and other forums for redressal.

The meeting brought to light concerns about the potential ecological and social damage posed by the project. Locals fear the proposed development



UNITED THEY OPPOSE: Loliem-Polem Villagers stand their ground against the film city project

OUR LIVELIHOODS AT STAKE: LOCALS

■ The locals said resolutions passed in 2016 & 2023 prohibited non-traditional uses of the plateau

■ Described NOC issued on Oct 14, 2024, as a breach of these resolutions

■ Condemned the Comunidade's affidavit as violation of community's rights

■ Resolved that the panchayat write to TCP Dept,

Comunidade & ESG, demanding the cancellation of NOC

■ The resolution stated that if the authorities fail to act within 15 days, the panchayat will move the HC for redressal

■ Fear the proposed development of amusement parks, hotels, villas, and other infra would disrupt the plateau's ecosystem, displace them,

and threaten their livelihoods

■ Argued that such projects prioritise profit over people

■ Urged authorities to reconsider the proposal

■ Expressed apprehension that the ESA status could impose unnecessary restrictions on their daily activities

■ Offered critical protections against large-scale commercial exploitation

of amusement parks, hotels, villas, and other infrastructure would disrupt the plateau's fragile ecosystem, displace the community, and threaten their traditional livelihoods. Environmentalists and activists argued that such projects prioritise profit over people, urging authorities to reconsider the proposal.

The issue of designating the area as an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) was also debated.

A Comunidade member ex-

pressed apprehension that the ESA status could impose unnecessary restrictions on villagers' daily activities. However, environmentalists clarified that the ESA designation would have minimal impact on basic activities, while offering critical protections against large-scale commercial exploitation.

In addition to the project, villagers raised the issue of blocked traditional pathways leading to the seashore. The gram sabha resolved to work

with authorities to identify and reopen any obstructed paths, ensuring uninterrupted access for the community. These pathways, essential for locals, have been the subject of past resolutions, but remain unaddressed.

The meeting saw allegations that the gram sabha was deliberately scheduled on a day when many villagers were preoccupied with religious events, such as the feast at Galgibaga church and a temple programme in Maxem.

Critics claimed the timing suppressed participation, though more than 75 members still attended.

Sarpanch Nisha Chari chaired the meeting, supported by Deputy Sarpanch Chandrakant Sudhir and Secretary Sandeep Desai. Ex-sarpanchas Sachin Naik and Ajay Loliemkar were among the attendees, along with activists and community leaders such as BMC chairperson Manoj Prabhugaonkar, Dennis Fernandes, Prashant Pagi, and Dattaprasad Prabhugaonkar.

The gram sabha also reviewed financial matters, confirming the minutes of the October 27, 2024, meeting and income and expenditure details for the period from October 2024 to January 2025.

Villagers voiced their commitment to taking legal action if their demands were not met, with a clear warning to the TCP Department, the Comunidade, and the ESG. The resolution emphasised that any document or instrument permitting non-traditional uses of the plateau, such as the NOC or a lease deed, would be deemed invalid for violating past resolutions.

Activists reiterated the plateau's ecological significance, noting its role in preserving local biodiversity and sustaining the community's agricultural and cultural practices. "This project will destroy the existence of the village," said activists, urging the authorities to prioritise the long-term interests of Loliem-Polem's residents.

The villagers' stand highlights a broader struggle to balance development and environmental sustainability. With the Bhagwati plateau serving as a lifeline for the local population, they have vowed to protect it from unsustainable ventures that threaten their future.

Faded speed breakers pose danger at Majorda



Team Herald

MARGAO: Though the authorities have built a number of speed breakers all over Majorda as part of its measures to reduce accidents, the 'faded' stripes on them have become a cause of concern to residents of Majorda. "This busy road just opposite Mother of God Convent has a speed breaker with no sign, making it a potential hazard to road users," says local resident Brito Inacio Carvalho.

"There are many speed breakers in Majorda that need signs and paint," Carvalho said, pointing out several critical locations. "From the Majorda beach road junction to Utorda Rex bar junction alone, there are at least five places where speed breakers need paint and warning sign boards posted at least 20 meters from the actual speed breaker. The same state of affairs exists on the stretch from Majorda church to the

This busy road just opposite Mother of God Convent has a speed breaker with no sign, making it a potential hazard to road users – Brito Carvalho, Majorda resident

Utorda-Verna road." "What's most frustrating is that our panchas pass these speed breakers more than once daily," Carvalho pointed out, urging the authorities to "wake up the persons and department in charge" to address this issue.

Carvalho criticised both the PWD and the Majorda-Utorda-Calata village panchayat for not rectifying the matter on time. "We shouldn't wait and say 'mhaka kiteak podlam' (why does it affect us) until one of our own succumbs to a mishap because of carelessness and irresponsibility by PWD and negligence by the panchayat," he emphasised.

PARK OR FOREST?



The St Lawrence Children's and Outdoor Fitness Park at Sinquerim lies in a dilapidated condition with wild grass further rendering it a shabby look

Aquem-Baixo locals oppose roadside kiosks

MARGAO: During the gram sabha meeting of the Aquem-Baixo village panchayat, the local residents decisively rejected any future presence of roadside gaddas at Rawanfond.

The meeting, presided over by Sarpanch Danny Fernandes, supported the panchayat's earlier action against these structures and resolved to maintain the area free from encroachments.

The matter, which came up for discussion at the gram sabha, culminated in a clear consensus against allowing the gaddas to return. The attendees raised their hands to emphasize their collective stance, sending a message that such roadside establishments would not be tolerated again.

It may be recalled that last month, the village panchayat, under the leadership of Fernandes, conducted a drive to clear the illegal gaddas at Rawanfond. The operation, carried out with police support, aimed to restore order and ensure the area remains free from unauthorized setups. In addition to addressing the gaddas issue, the gram sabha also resolved to identify a suitable location within the village for establishing a dedicated fish market, a long-pending demand of the community.

Dronacharya Award winner Armando greeted with great enthusiasm at Dabolim

Reception was a heartfelt moment for all present, celebrating Colaco's unparalleled football achievements

Team Herald

MARGAO: Curtorim's very own Armando Colaco, the esteemed recipient of the prestigious Dronacharya Award, was greeted with great enthusiasm and pride upon his return to Goa.

The legendary football coach, who has made significant contributions to the sport and brought immense pride to Curtorim and Goa, was welcomed at Dabolim Airport by Engr. Roque Virgilio Mascarenhas, along with several prominent residents of Curtorim, including Vincent Rodrigues, Sebastiao, Savio Fernandes, Joaquim Dias, Raymond Sequeira, Joao Paulo Fernandes, and many others.



The reception at the airport was a heartfelt moment for all present, celebrating Colaco's unparalleled achievements in football and his well-deserved recognition at the national level. "Curtorim stands united in honouring its legendary coach, whose contributions continue to inspire genera-

tions," said Roque Virgilio Mascarenhas, expressing the collective pride of the community. The joy of Colaco's recognition has spread throughout the State, with various associations and individuals from across Goa expressing their happiness over his accomplishment.

Romi lipi warriors speak the language of justice

Threaten to knock Court doors if govt fails to bestow equal status on the script

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Global Konknni Forum (GKF) announced on Monday that they would pursue legal action if the Goa Legislative Assembly fails to pass a resolution granting equal status to the Roman script within the Official Language Act.

Addressing a press conference in Margao, newly elected President, Prof Antonio Alvares, stated that the Forum had no objections to the members who left the association and formed a new group. "Our primary objective is to seek justice for the Roman script, and we will continue to do so until our goal is achieved," he emphasized.

Alvares mentioned that the Forum had been working on this cause for over two years and there was still much work to be done.

He further revealed that the Forum was prepared to take legal action if the Legislative Assembly members did not pass a resolution addressing the demand for equal recognition of the Roman script. Responding to a reporter's question, Alvares pointed out that the Constitution of India does not allow discrimination based on script.

"The government cannot ignore the reality that the Roman script is widely used in Goa," he asserted.

The Forum also responded to questions about the recent split among its members, stating that a few members had left to form their own group. However, the Forum expressed no concerns over this split.

Jose Salvador Fernandes, Secretary of the Global Konknni Forum, elaborated on the background of the Forum's formation. He explained that the groundwork for the Forum began two years ago, with Domnic Fernandes leading efforts to rally those passionate about promoting Konknni in the Roman script and rectifying the injustice done to the script in the



Our primary objective is to seek justice for the Roman script and we will continue to do so until our goal is achieved – Prof Antonio Alvares, GKF President

Official Language Act. After extensive groundwork, the Forum was officially formed in May 2024.

GRLA bats for introduction of Roman script in schools under NEP framework

Team Herald

MARGAO: Global Romi Lipi Abhiyan (GRLA) appeals to all Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) across political parties to prioritize discussions on the introduction of Roman Script Konknni in schools under the NEP framework.

A thorough study of the provisions laid out in the NEP should guide these discussions in the upcoming Assembly session, stated Kennedy Afonso, President, GRLA.

GRLA highlights that the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 presents a crucial opportunity for the introduction of Roman Script Konknni into schools. The NEP places significant emphasis on preserving

and promoting India's linguistic diversity, and advocates for the inclusion of mother tongues, local languages, and dialects within the school curriculum. In this context, the NEP provides a comprehensive framework for safeguarding Konknni, which is currently listed as an endangered language by UNESCO.

Afonso appealed to the Government of Goa to implement the provisions of the NEP by introducing Roman Script Konknni into schools, ensuring that this policy is not relegated to mere documentation. Furthermore, Article 29(1) of the Indian Constitution safeguards the rights of minorities to preserve their language, script, and culture, reinforcing the urgency of this demand.