

LOUTOLIM RYOTS PURSUE GI TAG FOR SALT-HARDY, FIBRE-RICH 'KORGUT' RICE

Team Herald

MARGAO: Farmers in Loutolim are taking steps to get their unique Korgut rice variety Geographical Indication (GI) tagged, while simultaneously battling the high-level Borim bridge project that threatens their khazan lands. The farmers have formed a dedicated committee to pursue the GI registration, with J Santano Rodrigues initiating the process under the guidance of Deepak Parab from the State's Science and Technology board.

The committee comprises local farmers including Albert Pinheiro, Hipolito D'Costa, Jose B A Gracias, Paul De Sa, Valeriano Fernandes, Gabriel Fernandes, Leo Andrade, and Matthew Oliveira.

This initiative is part of the Goa PRIs Union Agro-Biodiversity Team's efforts, with Santano Rodrigues serving as a Goa Agro-Bi-



odiversity Team member, Convenor of Goa PRIs Union, and Chairman of the Curtorim Biodiversity Management Committee (BMC) and Cuddtari Agro-Biodiversity Farmers Club.

Speaking to OHERALDO, Albert Pinheiro, president of the Carbot, Mascasana & Bebdo Tenants Association in Loutolim, shed light on the unique characteristics of their Korgut rice.

"This rice is special," Pinheiro explained. "It's completely organic, with no fertilisers or pesticides. What makes it truly remarkable is its ability to survive in

saline water. Even if it gets submerged, it still grows and gives a good yield."

Highlighting the rice's distinctive properties, Pinheiro noted, "It's particularly good for diabetic people and is now in demand, selling for 85 to 90 rupees a kg. The brownish cover has medicinal value, so even boiling requires special care to prevent breaking in the mill." He emphasised a unique culinary aspect, stating, "It's especially good for kanjee (pez) because unlike other rice varieties, the boiling water can actually be consumed."

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The key unique factors of the Korgut rice go beyond its market value. Its ability to tolerate waterlogging is particularly crucial during monsoon seasons, a characteristic that sets it apart from other agricultural varieties in the region.

The Korgut rice variety shows remarkable adapta-



tion to specific local conditions. While similar salinity-resistant crops exist in other areas, the Loutolim variety stands out for its unique combination of characteristics. Similar crops are cultivated in other coastal areas of Goa, including Rachol-Camorlim, Neura, Chora, Divar, that share similar climate and soil conditions.

Traditional cultivation methods play a crucial role in maintaining the rice's unique properties. Unlike modern agricultural practices that rely heavily on chemical interventions, the farmers of Loutolim have preserved a

The Loutolim farmers have made it clear: their khazan lands and their Korgut rice are not just a crop, but living proof of their community's resilience, traditional knowledge, and deep connection to the land. Through their efforts to obtain a GI tag and protect their fields, they are fighting to preserve a vital piece of Goa's agricultural and cultural heritage

traditional approach that allows the Korgut rice to thrive naturally in challenging coastal environments.

The pursuit of the GI tag represents a critical effort to formally recognize and protect this unique agricultural heritage. It goes beyond mere

economic considerations, touching on broader issues of biodiversity conservation, traditional farming practices, and cultural preservation.

Local experts point out that the proposed bridge project poses a significant threat to these carefully cultivated khazan lands. These lands, maintained for generations, represent more than just agricultural space – they are a living ecosystem that supports a unique method of farming deeply rooted in local traditions.

It may be recalled that the farmers from Loutolim along with their counterparts from Borim, have been challenging the bridge project for the past year-and-a-half, with their next NGT hearing scheduled for February 21st. They are also preparing to approach the high court to protect their fields, demonstrating their commitment to preserving their agricultural lands.

Five more Margao eateries sealed for pollution

Team Herald

MARGAO: In an ongoing effort to curb pollution, upon the directions of the Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB), South Goa District Magistrate, sealed five establishments in Margao on Friday.

The businesses, primarily restaurants, were found to be discharging wastewater into stormwater drains.

According to Additional Collector-I Srinet Kothwale, the action follows a series of inspections by the GSPCB, which revealed that several hotels and restaurants in Margao were improperly releasing kitchen and wastewater into the public drainage system.

Moreover, many of these

establishments were found to be operating without the necessary consents from the GSPCB, in violation of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981. These businesses, which include cafes and hotels, were engaging in commercial activities without the required approvals from the Board.

The GSPCB issued show-cause notices to the establishments, citing their violations of key environmental regulations. The notices also instructed the businesses to cease operations until further notice, emphasising the importance of complying with pollution control laws.

Velim MLA Silva calls for new Regional Plan for Goa

The resolution is expected to be tabled on February 7, reserved for private members' motions

Team Herald

PANJIM: Velim MLA Cruz Silva has proposed a private member's resolution for the upcoming Assembly session, urging the government to scrap the outdated Regional Plan Goa 2021 and initiate a consultative process to draft a new time-bound Regional Plan.

Silva emphasised that the existing plan has surpassed its effective period and should be frozen. He advocated that no permissions or technical clearances should be granted for land development or construction, except for individual houses, until a new Regional Plan is notified.

The MLA highlighted the importance of a participatory approach, urging the government to incorporate suggestions from the general public, NGOs, and statutory bodies such as gram sabhas, village development committees, biodiversity management committees, and panchayats.

To build support for this initiative, Silva has already organised seven meetings across Goa, rallying stakeholders to back the formulation of a new plan that reflects the state's current developmental and environmental needs.

The resolution is expected to be tabled on Friday, February 7, reserved for private members' motions.

HANDMADE HERITAGE

SAGUN GAWADE



A artisan makes a traditional broom at Tribal Village during the Lokotsav 2025 at Kala Academy, Campal, Panjim

Prioritise career, embrace continuous learning: Yuri

Team Herald

MARGAO: Leader of the Opposition Yuri Alemao on Friday underscored the importance of focus, commitment, and a growth mindset for students during the inauguration of the "Growth Mindset" program at Maria Bambina Higher Secondary School in Cunclim. The event was organised by the Office of the Commissioner of Labour & Employment. Alemao urged students to prioritise their careers

and embrace continuous learning to unlock their full potential. He encouraged them to enjoy the learning process and participate in competitions to gain valuable experience.

"By focusing on learning and staying updated, you can excel in life. Constantly upgrading your knowledge is key to solving challenges," Alemao said, citing former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's habit of regular reading as an example of lifelong learning.

The event was attended by Dr. Levinson Martins, Commissioner of Labour & Employment, Headmistress Lily Fernandes, and resource persons Dr. Jorson Fernandes, Neeraj Aguiar, Nazareth Fernandes, and Savio Vaz, who provided insights and guidance to students.

Alemao concluded by emphasising that knowledge builds confidence and enables positive change, inspiring students to pursue excellence in their studies and careers.

Gates, wall across Baina flyover built for security reasons: MPA Chairman

Team Herald

MORMUGAO: Mormugao Port Authority (MPA) Chairman Dr N Vinodkumar on Thursday said that the gates and compound wall blocking access to the newly-inaugurated loop flyover in Vasco are being constructed in view of the safety of the people.

Speaking to reporters, he said, "We too have not started using the road. We will use it in

a couple of days because we are also having a trial run. I do not know what the controversy is. The gate is an entry point to the port and all the gates will have to be secured."

"We are an international standard of bureau (ISB) compliant port where we follow the international guidelines. There will be gates at all the entry points. Our concern is related to port security and the government of Goa will have to tell

us how the traffic will move," he said.

A day after the inauguration of the new loop port connectivity flyover by Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, the Mormugao Port Authority (MPA) on Wednesday started constructing gates and a compound wall to block access to either side of the ramps at Baina, inviting outrage from the public and the Mormugao Municipal Council.

Margao wholesale fish market set for commissioning, sans cold storage facility

Team Herald

MARGAO: After years of redevelopment efforts, Goa's only wholesale fish market at Margao is finally nearing its much-anticipated commissioning. The Goa State Infrastructure Development Corporation (GSIDC) is expected to secure the power connection shortly, clearing the final hurdle before the market becomes operational.

While the government has tentatively marked January 26 for the market's inauguration, the event's date hinges on Chief Minister Pramod Sawant's availability. All redevelopment works have been completed except for the power connection, which is slated for resolution by Friday.

However, one critical component remains conspicuously absent: the cold storage facility—a feature crucial for the market's long-term success. Proposed to assist local fishing communities, such as ramponkars, magkars, and boat owners, this facility would provide much-needed storage for surplus fish. Despite the central government allocating Rs 23 crore for the redevelopment project, primarily to fund the cold storage unit, delays have left this component unaddressed.

Sources reveal that the South Goa Planning and Development Authority



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(SGPDA) has been unable to secure an alternate site for a makeshift market, a prerequisite for building the cold storage block. This logistical snag has stalled the unit's construction, casting a shadow on the project's comprehensive completion.

The cold storage was originally envisioned as

part of Block A, which includes other essential infrastructure like an FDA testing laboratory, an ice flaking machine, and offices for the SGPDA and Fisheries Department. While these features were planned, they remain unrealized. Block A also serves as the main entry point for vehicles, underscoring its importance in the market's operational blueprint.

With the market now ready for use, both the state government and SGPDA face mounting pressure to expedite the cold storage facility—a feature regarded as vital for ensuring the market's functionality and sustainability.

As the inauguration draws closer, stakeholders are keenly watching whether the government can overcome these final hurdles and deliver on its promises to the fishing community, whose livelihoods depend heavily on efficient market infrastructure.

Raia to host traditional Goan cultural festival 'Lokutsav' on Republic Day

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a bid to preserve and promote traditional Goan culture, the Barebhatt Social and Cultural Association (BSCA) is all set to organise its annual 'Lokutsav' on January 26 at Raia.

This year, a special addition to the festival will be 'Konkani Kantaranchi Sanz,' which is expected to be a major attraction, drawing a large crowd, as in previous years.

Romaldo Gonsalves, President of BSCA, shared that the event will feature an exhibition showcasing various items popular among the Scheduled Caste community, as well as traditional occupations of Goa and its diverse communities.

"The exhibition will include 'fulfanti,' 'Narl Solop,' and other traditional items, alongside sports activities such as the traditional 'Mitthamni' and 'Logorio,'" he explained. The event will begin at 4 pm at the Raia Sports Complex.

The inauguration of the festival will be held in the presence of several dignitaries, including Govind Gaude, Minister for Art and Culture,

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– Romaldo Gonsalves, president, Barebhatt Social and Cultural Association

Curtorim MLA and GIDC Chairman Aleixo Reginaldo Lourenco, Fatorda MLA Vijai Sardesai, Raia Village Panchayat Sarpanch Mario D'Souza, and Vice-President of the Goa Football Association, Anthony Pango.

Additionally, Fr. Ventura Lourenco, Parish Priest of Livramento Church-Arlim, and Fr. Christo Pinto, Chaplain of Manora Chapel, will also attend, along with other distinguished guests.

It is worth noting that the BSCA has been organising this popular 'Lokutsav' for several years, consistently attracting large crowds each year.

Human rights watchdog seeks response on housing eviction case affecting factory workers

PANJIM: Addressing a complaint filed by the Goa Trade and Commercial Workers Union concerning the potential eviction of seven families from their residential quarters in Sancoale, the Goa Human Rights Commission (GHRC) has issued notices to the Director of Nisa Associates and the General Manager (Personnel and Administration) of Paradeep Phosphates

The workers were asked to vacate their quarters by July 2024 after the property was sold to a builder; they have requested an extension until the end of the academic year to avoid disrupting their children's education

Ltd, instructing them to provide their responses by February 10.

Union President Christopher Fonseca lodged the complaint, highlighting the plight of workers' families who re-

quested an extension to remain in their quarters until the end of the academic year to avoid disrupting their children's education.

Fonseca urged the Commission to intervene, arguing

that postponing the eviction would protect the children's academic stability. He assured the Commission that the affected workers were willing to vacate the premises after the academic year concluded.

Nisa Associates, which provides security services for Paradeep Phosphates at Zuarinagar, had reportedly asked the workers to vacate the company colony by July 2024. Ac-

cording to Fonseca, this directive came after the company sold the property to a builder.

The affected workers, many of whom have served the company for over 20 years, had requested alternative accommodations. Fonseca reiterated that the workers are ready to submit an undertaking to vacate once their children's academic obligations are fulfilled.