

VELSAO VILLAGERS RALLY AGAINST RAILWAY ENCROACHMENTS, APPROACH DISTRICT COURT

Construction of the second railway track at Primeirovaddo has reportedly blocked access to heritage homes, trapping residents' vehicles within their compounds and severely disrupting daily life

Team Herald

MARGAO: A large number of villagers from Velsao and neighbouring areas, including Pale, Issorcim, Cansaulim, Arossim, and Urtoda, gathered at the South Goa Collectorate in Margao for the second hearing before the Inspector of Survey and Land Records (ISLR) on Friday, where they challenged the claims being made by the Railways. Their collective opposition to the double-tracking project by South Western Railway (SWR) highlights growing tensions between local residents and railway authorities.

The ongoing matter, which has been under scrutiny since January 6, 2025, revolves around the claims of ownership made by SWR over parcels of land allegedly acquired during surveys conducted between 1968 and 1971. However, locals pointed out that according to the State Department of Revenue's gazette notification issued on May 26, 2023, SWR was identified as being in possession of certain lands during that period, but no formal rights were assigned. This lack of documentation has been a central point of contention, with villagers presenting title documents dating back to the pre-liberation era to assert their ownership and challenge SWR's claims.

Despite these unresolved legalities, villagers allege that SWR, through contractors Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL) and another agency, has trespassed onto



The government is neglecting the rights of its citizens, who have lived on inherited lands for generations, predating the arrival of railways in the 1890's. Our peaceful lives are being ghettoized by an indifferent government and reckless development – Orville Dourado, founder, Goencho Ekvott

their land. Construction of the second railway track at Primeirovaddo, Velsao, has reportedly blocked access to heritage homes, trapping residents' vehicles within their compounds and severely disrupting daily life.

Goencho Ekvott (GE), an advocacy group spearheading the villagers' resistance, has been vocal in its criticism of the railways' actions. Speaking to the media, GE founder Orville Dourado Rodrigues accused the government of neglecting the rights of

Legal action sought over violation of property rights

Team Herald

MARGAO: A formal complaint lodged by Sandra Rodrigues, a resident of Primeirovaddo, Velsao, has brought to light allegations of illegal land filling activities carried out by South Western Railway (SWR) and Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL). According to Rodrigues, these activities have completely obstructed access to her property in Survey No 58/10, leaving her family stranded without the ability to use their vehicles.

In her letter addressed to multiple authorities, including the Mamlatdar of Mormugao, the Verna Police Inspector, the South Goa District Magistrate and the South Goa MP, Rodrigues detailed how the construction work had not only altered the natural terrain but also violated

its citizens, who have lived on inherited lands for generations, predating the arrival of railways in the 1890s. "Our peaceful lives are being ghettoized by an

indifferent government and reckless development," he stated.

GE Secretary Olencio Simoes emphasised the strength of the villagers'

property rights. The land in question, she emphasized, lies outside the purview of any sanctioned land acquisition process. Despite this, she pointed out that SWR and RVNL have allegedly undertaken construction without adhering to legal procedures, causing significant hardship to local residents.

Rodrigues has appealed for immediate intervention under the Goa, Daman, and Diu Mamlatdar's Court Act, 1966, which provides remedies for obstruction of rightful access. She has urged the authorities to investigate the illegal activities, halt the ongoing work, and restore her property's access. The complaint also seeks legal action against those responsible for the alleged encroachments. Rodrigues has sought immediate intervention from the authorities to address the issue.

case, citing documentary evidence to counter the railways' ownership claims. Simoes also questioned how construction could proceed without adhering

to due process. When asked whether a stay had been granted, Rodrigues clarified, "The ISLR has stated they lack the authority to issue a stay. We have filed a suit in the District Court in Margao yesterday, seeking urgent relief."

Villagers have expressed their frustration with the authorities' inaction. They believe SWR's actions not only disregard legal protocols but also violate their Right of Way (ROW), a route they have used since the 1800s. The ongoing construction has led to blocked access roads and environmental damage, further aggravating tensions.

The villagers remain hopeful for a favorable outcome as the ISLR court continues to hear the matter. Meanwhile, they have turned to the District Court for intervention to prevent further encroachment and to protect their ancestral lands from irreversible damage.

AAP MP seeks time to file reply in defamation case

Team Herald

BICHOLIM: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MP Sanjay Singh on Friday sought additional time to file his reply in a Rs 100 crore defamation case filed by Sulakshana Sawant, wife of Chief Minister Pramod Sawant.

Singh has also undertaken not to make any defamatory statements in connection with the case till the next hearing or till the reply is filed by him. Singh's counsel sought time stating that his client was busy in campaigning for Delhi Assembly polls.

Following this, the Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC), Bicholim later adjourned the hearing to March 7.

Sulakshana had filed a defamation case against the Rajya Sabha MP for his alleged statement at a press briefing in AAP's national office in Delhi on December 5, 2024 wherein

he had alleged that she also was involved in multi crore cash-for-government jobs scam in the State.

During the last hearing on January 10, Singh's lawyer Adv S Bodke had submitted to the Court that his client will not make any defamatory statements against Sulakshana Sawant until the next date of hearing. He had also sought time to file written statement and reply to temporary injunction application.

Sulakshana, the former president of BJP Mahila Morcha in her complaint had urged the Court to direct Singh to publish an apology clarifying that the defamatory video, article, interview and statements were false, not based on facts, and tender an unconditional apology. She had also prayed to restrain the AAP MP by a permanent injunction from making any defamatory statements pertaining to her on any of the social media websites or portals.

Goa RERA imposes Rs 5 lakh penalty on builder

Team Herald

PANJIM: The Goa Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) imposed a penalty of Rs 5 lakh on a prominent real estate firm M/s Prestige Estates and M/s Mathias Construction Ocean Crest for failing to hand over the possession of apartments to buyers.

The developers have also been directed to pay penal interest and further to repair the broken tiles and marbles in the apartment as complained by the buyers.

The buyers of the apartment in the Prestige Ocean Crest at Dona Paula Dr Nikhil Sontakke and Dr Tripti Bansal had filed a complaint before RERA stating that there was a

13-month delay in handing over the apartment which amounted to breach of the agreement. The buyers were assured to get the possession on January 31, 2023.

The buyers also complained of broken tiles and shoddily fit doors when the owners took possession of the flat.

Reprieve for 12 'illegal structures' at heritage site in Old Goa

Additional Director of Panchayats quashes, sets aside demolition order of Se Old Goa panchayat

Team Herald

PANJIM: The 12 'illegal structures' situated within 300 metres of the centrally protected monument Basilica of Bom Jesus Church at Old Goa, got a reprieve as the Additional Director of Panchayats-I, Panjim quashed and set aside the demolition order of the Se Old Goa village panchayat and upheld the appeal filed by late Shalini Madkaikar.

Last month, the High Court of Bombay at Goa has directed the Additional Director of Panchayats-I to decide within four weeks the appeal filed by late Madkaikar challenging the demolition order passed by the Se Old Goa village panchayat by an order dated April 24, 2023.

The panchayat had ordered demolition of these structures since they were built without obtaining permission from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), construction licence from the village panchayat or technical clearance from the TCP Department. The panchayat had noted in the demolition order that all the structures were new structures and there were no documents that had permitted construction of the said structures.

But within 15 days, Madkaikar obtained an ex-parte ad-interim stay of demolition order at the very first hearing from the Director of Panchayat in appeal and as there was no hearing for almost a year, Vasco Seby Dias of Fontainhas, Panjim

approached the High Court seeking directions to the authorities to demolish the 12 illegal structures at Old Goa and to disconnect electricity and water connections to them.

The Additional Director of Panchayats-I in her order stated that from the documents produced on record by the appellant and the respondents, it appears that the appellant had not done any new construction to the said properties nor the respondents had produced on record any material to substantiate their allegations that the deceased appellant carried out any new illegal construction in her property nor produced any document on record to show that the deceased appellant or her relatives had

built new construction. The Additional Director of Panchayats-I further observed that the village panchayat had issued necessary provisional NOCs and permissions to the sons of the appellants for operating businesses from time to time.

In November 2024, after the Tiswadi Taluka Mamlatdar Kaushik Dessai in his report stressed the need to remove these structures as it would cause traffic bottleneck during the St Francis Xavier Exposition. North Goa Collector Sneha Gite, IAS wrote to both, the Additional Director of Panchayats-I and the Director of Panchayats, Panjim to decide on the appeal expeditiously as the demolition order could not be executed due to ex-parte stay.

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