

BETHORA-NIRANKAL GRAMSABHA FACES PROTESTS OVER UNRESOLVED ISSUES

Villagers furious over police deployment at meeting; row erupts over incomplete garbage treatment plant, water scarcity and poor road condition

Team Herald

PONDA: High drama unfolded on Sunday at the Bethora-Nirankal-Conshem-Codar Gramsabha, which was marred by protests for nearly an hour. A group of villagers boycotted the meeting, voicing concerns over the incomplete garbage treatment plant in Vaidyanagar, Bethora. Tensions escalated further as locals confronted the Sarpanch about the presence of police personnel at the event. Sarpanch Madu Khandeparkar, however, dismissed these allegations, stating, "These claims are baseless and politically motivated."

ed." He asserted that the Gramsabha was conducted legally and later presented a list of completed development works. At the beginning of the meeting, villagers questioned the legality of the gathering, claiming it had not been held within the mandated three-month schedule. One villager said, "This Gramsabha is illegal; it has not been held as per the required time frame, and we will be complaining to the BDO." The situation took another turn when police were deployed to the Gramsabha, prompting locals to question the need

for such a presence. "Why are the police here?" one villager asked. "Will we be able to freely discuss our issues with them watching over us?" Many expressed concerns that the police presence would stifle open discussion and prevent villagers from freely raising their concerns. The discontent grew when the secretary began reading the minutes of the previous Gramsabha. A group of locals raised their concerns over the stalled garbage treatment plant in Vaidyanagar, Bethora, which had remained incomplete for two years despite the government's

investment of 50 lakh rupees. Hemant Samant, a villager, voiced his frustration, saying, "The garbage treatment plant is crucial for waste disposal in our area. Despite the resolution passed to complete it with police assistance, the work has ceased." The protestors boycotted the Gramsabha in frustration, and Samant added, "Many other important development works have been halted, and we have seen no progress." The villagers also criticised the Panchayat body for failing to follow up on development works, apart from sending letters to higher authorities. "The

Panchayat body is not taking any real action," said another villager. "They only send letters, but no follow-up has been done." Other issues raised included water scarcity, poor road conditions, non-functional CCTV cameras, and the inability to clear scrap yards. One woman highlighted the danger of an overgrown tree in her area, stating, "I have made several complaints, but nothing has been done to remove the dangerous tree in my area." Villagers also accused certain Panchayat members of being passive and more interested in gaining the Sarpanch position through a "musical chair"

approach. "Some Panchayat members seem only interested in rotating the Sarpanch position every year," a villager remarked. Sarpanch Madu Khandeparkar rejected all the allegations, labelling them as politically motivated. He explained, "The delay in the Gramsabha by two days was due to the intention to present the budget. If the budget had not been presented, a separate Gramsabha would have been required." He also clarified, "The secretary is responsible for two panchayats, and the presence of a BDO representative confirms the meeting's legality."

Betalbhatim gram sabha says no to swimming pools

Team Herald

MARGAO: In an interesting development on Sunday, the Betalbhatim Village Panchayat passed a resolution to halt the issuance of permission for swimming pools in new construction projects, citing a shortage of water in the area. However, the proposal was met with opposition from a section of the gram sabha members, who raised concerns over its legal validity. Sarpanch Anthony Fernandes explained that the proposal was presented and later approved after a group of villagers raised concerns about the water shortage exacerbated by the presence of swimming pools. "The issue is primarily about the shortage of water in the village, but the

panchayat must also consider the legal implications of halting permission for swimming pools," Fernandes stated. Former Minister and local resident Micky Pacheco weighed in on the matter, arguing that the panchayat has no authority to prevent individuals from constructing swimming pools simply due to water scarcity. "The panchayat cannot stop anyone from starting a swimming pool based on water shortage alone. If they believe it is necessary, the government would need to amend the relevant laws," Pacheco said. He further emphasized that business owners have the legal right to build swimming pools if their projects are in compliance with the law.

citizenherald

Arambol's decline: Encroachments, pollution and crime taking their toll

Arambol beach used to be a secluded, clean stretch, perfect to spend a relaxing evening – despite the rush of tourists, it was still considered a safe beach. The recent incident where a man was beaten up by shack workers at Arambol is a wake-up call for the government as well as those who frequent that beach, a sign that things are deteriorating at a rapid pace.



CITIZEN SABINA DE SOUSA Siolim
The proliferation of some shabby shacks serving low quality food is evident by the number of shack workers loitering around the beach, calling out to people and pestering beachgoers. These shacks have left hardly any space for walkers – during the day, beach

beds and umbrellas abound, while after sundown, their chairs and tables are spread out over

the beach, forcing people to walk around them. One part of the beach has been taken over by ice cream vendors – there are dozens of carts jostling for space on every metre of the beach and these ice cream carts stay on the beach until the wee hours of the morning – why are they given

permission to stay on the beach so late? Who are they catering to? The beauty of Arambol, and even the beach alongside the sweet water lake, has been ruined by the thriving illegal businesses. There are unlicensed eateries and even shady lodges all along the rocky beach stretch, and its no mystery where their sewage and waste is being dumped. Cheap shacks with rooms for hire next to the sweet water lake have large pipes sucking water from the spring that feeds the iconic lake. The beach may be cut off, but it still should be kept clean and safe for people to visit. I urge the authorities to come down strongly on all the encroachments, illegal shacks and lodges and the polluters to save Arambol from a certain death.

Nullah opposite Mapusa fish market stinks



As one walks down to the bustling Mapusa market along the newly slabbed nullah behind the fish market, bordering the government complex, the stench of untreated sewage fills the air. Instead of addressing the root cause of the pollution, the only action taken by the officials—the MMC and the sitting MLA—has been to cover the drain. However, without proper

CITIZEN GREGORY E D'SOUZA Siolim
planning, they have merely allowed the sewage to continue flowing untreated beneath it. The Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) remains in a deep slumber, while the sanitary inspector and health officers have failed in their duty to ensure a clean and hygienic

environment. I urge the MMC, the GSPCB, and the health department to visit the nullah behind the Mapusa market and take immediate steps to install a small sewage treatment plant. This will not only improve the quality of life for Mapsekaras but also ensure a cleaner and healthier environment for all visitors, free from the unbearable stench.

Painting of fish market walls not thought through



After years of redevelopment efforts, Goa's only wholesale fish market in Margao is finally nearing its much-anticipated commissioning. However, one critical component remains conspicuously absent—a cold storage facility, which is crucial for the market's long-term success. Originally proposed to support local fishing communities, such as ramponkars and boat owners, this facility would provide essential storage for surplus fish, prevent-

ing wastage and ensuring better price stability. Another intriguing aspect of the newly developed market is the choice of artwork on its front wall—a painting of dolphins. Given that dolphins are a protected species, vulnerable to extinction, their depiction on a fish market seems out of place. In fact, the structure now resembles more of an aquarium than a commercial seafood hub. A more fitting choice would have been paintings of fish commonly consumed in Goa, such as mackerels, sardines, prawns, and shellfish, which better reflect the market's purpose.

CITIZEN ADELMO FERNANDES Vasco

Nuvem stretch of Western Bypass pitch dark

The residents of Nuvem have been waiting for their stretch of the Western Bypass to be lit up for over 6 months now. While the lights are installed, they do not work. This has made part of the highway, a 3-km stretch, dangerous and a menace for



CITIZEN DANIEL RODRIGUES Nuvem
local residents. I walk my dog along this stretch and we've stepped on glass pieces on the road because of the poor visibility. There are often drunkards sitting along the road, and some groups who gather to drink and play cards in the darkness. This leaves locals, especially women, feeling unsafe. The darkness also allows miscreants to dump garbage on the stretch, and people just fling trash bags out of their cars. Because the highway is so dark, all cars have their lights on high beam, blinding

each other. The last time the locals brought this issue up, we were told that some private LPG provider damaged the electricity cables while digging the road, and that's the reason the streetlights do not work. Then, the Power Dept was waiting to repair this damage. It has been several months since then, and the road is still in darkness! For the safety and security of the people of Nuvem and other commuters, I urge the authorities to ensure that the entire Western Bypass is illuminated properly.

Maintain the beauty of the Heritage complex

The bustling Old Goa complex attracts thousands of tourists every day. While there are many shops around the complex, many people sell various artifacts. Some sell their produce moving/hawking from place to place, some others have occupied places on footpaths. While most take away their unsold articles and the ta-



CITIZEN IBN BUDAN Verna
bles on which their products are displayed at the end of the day some others take the goods but tables, etc (as seen in the photo) are locked to the fence of the Basilica. These hawkers not only cause inconvenience to the visitors but also spoil the aesthetic

of the complex, besides dumping the waste. The authorities should remove the illegalities and restore the sanctity of the complex and also prevent inconvenience caused to the public. Failure to act promptly could lead to more places being occupied illegally thereby causing social and legal complexities in days ahead.

Garbage nuisance at Mapusa

The very popular deity, the Rakhandar of Mapusa, Bodge-shwar—named after the pandamus plant species (Bodgin)—is revered throughout the year, especially during the annual jatra, which was once an eight-day event but now extends to fifteen days. People from across Goa come to Bodge-shwar with banana offerings. The entire Bodge-shwar temple area, stretching up to Mapusa Chowk, lights up with the most eye-catching giant wheel, along with numerous small shops selling all sorts of goodies. The concept of a Rakhandar was originally to sustain the ecology of the

land, but today, the situation is drastically different—and gravely disturbing. Every day, the Bodge-shwar jatra draws huge crowds of people, bringing with them an unwelcome companion: plastic. Everything is sold in plastic bags, carried in plastic, and ultimately dumped in the temple area itself. By the end of five days of the jatra, heaps of garbage pile up in every corner, and with each passing year, this mountain of waste only grows. Strong winds carry plastic bags far and wide, worsening

the pollution. Once the jatra concludes, the entire Bodge-shwar area is left in a full-blown garbage crisis, with stray dogs and cattle feeding on the waste, further aggravating the problem. While many public-spirited organizations and concerned citizens voluntarily gather to clean up the area after the annual jatra, their efforts remain futile in the face of the overwhelming litter. Despite widespread awareness of the environmental hazards posed by plastic, the temple management committee has consistently failed to address this recurring plastic disaster. This is a human-made crisis, one



that can be easily resolved by simply banning plastic during the jatra. Regular awareness campaigns promoting "No Single-Use Plastic" should be actively undertaken by the temple committee among devotees and shopkeepers well before the jatra begins. Strict actions and fines must be imposed on those who do not adhere to these regulations. Every citizen must take personal responsibility by avoiding plastic bags

and opting for reusable alternatives. Offerings to the deity need not be wrapped in plastic but can be sold in cloth bags instead. Furthermore, proper segregation of biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste—a rare sight in the temple premises—must be strictly implemented. Our ancestors have always recounted stories of Bodge-shwar Rakhandar passing through to aid people in times of need. Legend warns: "This is his pathway. Do not block the route, or grave misfortunes will befall you." We have already encroached upon his sacred space with concrete structures—do we now burden him further with plastic waste? Or will we take responsibility for our actions? This is something we all need to reflect upon—and act upon—before it's too late.