

FIRM NO TO COAL: Sarzora locals reject railway station

Want proposal scrapped; launch a signature campaign, submit petition to Velim MLA to be forwarded to Chief Minister

Team Herald

MARGAO: Making it clear that they will not allow any unplanned or unwanted development that threatens their way of life, the residents of Sarzora launched a signature campaign strongly opposing the proposed railway station and submitted the petition to Velim MLA Cruz Silva to be forwarded to Chief Minister Pramod Sawant.

On Monday, the locals gathered in large numbers and handed over the petition to the MLA, who visited them to hear their grievances. Expressing their concerns, the villagers argued that the new station would disrupt the peace of their tranquil village and lead to unplanned development.

The villagers demanded for the station proposal to be scrapped entirely. Their petition has also been forwarded to the Sarzora Panchayat for the official record.

In their petition, the villagers pointed out that Sarzora is an agricultural belt with vast paddy fields, coconut plantations, and a



Sarzora locals discuss the proposed railway station issue with Velim MLA Cruz Silva

CALL TO PRESERVE BIODIVERSITY

- In the petition, the villagers pointed out that Sarzora is an agricultural belt with vast paddy fields, coconut plantations, and a rich biodiversity that must be preserved
- Stated that Sarzora is home to a large variety of flora and fauna, including leopards and medicinal plants
- Any commercial development in the area will lead to the exploitation of natural resources

rich biodiversity that must be preserved.

"Sarzora is home to a large variety of flora and fauna, including leopards

and medicinal plants. Any commercial development in the area will lead to the exploitation of natural resources," read the petition

signed by the villagers.

The villagers fear that the railway station, proposed to be built by Konkan Railway under the guise of improving passenger connectivity, is actually intended for the transport of coal, similar to the controversial South Western Railway (SWR) expansion plans that have been widely opposed in Goa.

"The Margao station is just eight kilometres away, and Balli station is even closer. There is no genuine need for another station

here unless there is a hidden agenda," the villagers added.

Sabita Mascarenhas, a Sarzora panch member, and other local residents also expressed concerns over an influx of migrants, unregulated commercial activity, and increased crime, which they believe would accompany the railway station.

"Our village has remained peaceful because we have resisted such projects in the past. We will not allow any unplanned or unwanted development that threatens our way of life," the villagers added.

The MLA assured the villagers that he would convey their concerns to the CM. He also promised to investigate whether the proposed station was genuinely intended for passenger use or if there was another purpose behind it. Silva added that he would ask for data regarding passenger traffic on this route, given that the existing railway connectivity appears to be sufficient, thereby showing no justification for this new station at Sarzora.

Navelkars flay VP on land development at Mandopa

Slam panchayat's inaction; farmers want Salpem Lake area fenced to protect their fields

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Navelim gram sabha witnessed a heated debate on land development at Mandopa with the villagers slamming the panchayat for not coming out with a concrete action despite repeatedly raising the issue.

Responding to the gram sabha members led by local resident George Barretto, who expressed their frustration over the issue, Sarpanch Michael Cardozo said that a show cause notice had been issued to the developer and assured that the matter would be taken forward.

After the meeting, the sarpanch told the media that the issue would be placed before the panchayat body meeting on February 15, where steps would be initiated to begin the process for demolishing the unauthorised structures.

Other issues such as Salpem Lake, stray cattle damaging fields and traffic

FARMERS' PLIGHT

- The farmers highlighted the difficulties they face in cultivating fields in the absence of fencing in the Salpem lake area
- They pointed out that the Western Bypass, which passes through the lake, has left fields exposed to stray cattle and illegal dumping of waste
- Demanded the immediate fencing of the area to protect their fields from further damage

which passes through the lake, has left fields exposed to stray cattle and illegal dumping of waste. The farmers demanded the immediate fencing of the area to protect their fields from further damage.

On the pressing issue of rising stray dog population, the sarpanch explained to the gram sabha members that the government had sent a memorandum urging the panchayat to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with NGOs for an Animal Birth Control (ABC) programme to manage the situation.

With regards to traffic congestion near educational institutions, the members questioned the parking provisions in the village plan. Additionally, despite the Western Bypass being inaugurated in December, they noted that heavy vehicles continue to pass through the village, further worsening the situation. They urged authorities to ensure that traffic is diverted as intended.

With regards to Salpem lake area, the farmers highlighted the difficulties they face in cultivating fields in the absence of fencing. They pointed out that the Western Bypass,

Security issues: A demand for an effective CCTV surveillance system in Margao

Team Herald

MARGAO: Expressing fear over the rising number of accidents and anti-social activities, Margao and Fatorda residents demanded a comprehensive and well-maintained CCTV camera surveillance system that can effectively address security issues and promote road safety in Margao.

The concern has been raised at multiple meetings of the Road Safety and Traffic Management Committee, but no concrete steps have been taken to address the same so far. Despite frequent discussions, the issue of CCTV cameras has not led to any developments.

In November 2013, the Margao Municipal Council installed several CCTV cameras under the MPLAD scheme, with an investment of Rs 18 lakh. Unfortunately, the cameras have now become defunct. In 2018, Fatorda MLA Vijai Sardesai secured a Rs 4 crore allocation under the scheme for the installation of 365 cameras at 112 locations across Fatorda. However, this project never came to fruition.

Further attempts were made to revive the initiative in May 2023 when MMC received a recommendation from ex-MP Vinay Tendulkar to install CCTV cameras at 38 locations in Margao. Unfortunately, the



It is high time that the civic body and the authorities concerned take the issue of CCTV surveillance seriously. Cameras should be installed at key traffic junctions where traffic signals are already present

- Milagres Fernandes, social worker from Fatorda

cameras be installed at key traffic junctions.

Roland D'Souza, another concerned citizen, echoed similar sentiments, stressing the role CCTV surveillance can play in a growing city like Margao. He highlighted the past failures of the CCTV system due to poor maintenance and underscored the need for a proper, sustainable plan to ensure the longevity and effectiveness of the surveillance cameras.

"People's safety has become a major concern today, and CCTV cameras are an important step in ensuring public security," he said.

The residents of Margao and Fatorda have now called on the authorities and the government to implement a long-term, well-maintained CCTV surveillance system that can effectively address security issues and promote road safety in the region.

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