

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.

congestion in the village were also discussed with the residents demanding answers over the delays in addressing these problems.

With regards to the 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.

proposal was shelved following the conclusion of the MP's tenure.

Milagres Fernandes, a social worker from Fatorda, said that with a surge in anti-social activities and road accidents in Margao, the installation of CCTV cameras is essential.

"It is high time that the civic body and the authorities take the issue of CCTV surveillance seriously," he said and demanded that

SGPDA still 'inactive' on floating sopo tender at wholesale fish market

Sources say the tender documents are ready and the proposal is awaiting approval

Team Herald

MARGAO: The South Goa Planning and Development Authority (SGPDA) is facing scrutiny over its failure to float a tender for sopo collection at the wholesale fish market, leading to significant revenue loss.

In August-September 2023, the SGPDA, under chairman Krishna alias Daji Salkar, issued a tender calling for bids for the sopo collection contract, valued at Rs 3.88 crore.

The authority had anticipated generating Rs 32 lakh in monthly revenue from the wholesale fish market's sopo collection, but departmental collections were averaging just Rs 15 lakh per month, sources claimed.

The process hit a roadblock due to a controversial clause in the 2023

TENDER NOT ISSUED & NO CONTRACTOR

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■ It anticipated monthly revenue of Rs 32 lakh, but departmental collections were averaging just Rs 15 lakh, sources claimed

■ The process hit a roadblock due to a controversial clause in the tender that required bidders to have 10 years of experience in the

fishing industry

■ This clause was removed in Dec 2023, but tender process failed to progress

■ Since then, SGPDA has not reissued the tender, resulting in revenue shortfall

■ Chairman had assured the media that a new tender would be floated by Jan 2025

■ The tender has not been issued, and there is no contractor in place

tender that required bidders to have 10 years of experience in the fishing industry. While this clause was removed in December 2023, the tender process failed to progress. The SGPDA has

not reissued the tender, raising concerns about delays and the resulting revenue shortfall.

Salkar had assured the media that a new tender would be floated by January 2025, allowing

for the appointment of a contractor. The issue was raised during the monsoon session of the Assembly.

The tender has not been issued, and there is still no contractor in place. According to sources, the tender documents are ready, and the proposal is awaiting approval at the next Authority meeting.

Joao Fernandes, a resident of Fatorda, criticised the SGPDA for its inaction. "It's shocking to see that despite knowing the revenue loss, the PDA is not taking this issue seriously. There seems to be something behind the scenes preventing the timely release of the tender," Fernandes said.

Salkar could not be contacted as his phone was unreachable.

Honour to represent Goa at Pariksha Pe Charcha: Quepem student

Team Herald

MARGAO: Nandini Velip, a student of the Government High School, Morpirla-Quepem, described her selection for Pariksha Pe Charcha 2025, as a significant moment.

Speaking to media persons after returning from Delhi, Nandini recounted her experience at the annual event, where she was one of 36 students chosen from across the country.

She interacted with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi for that event.

Expressing her gratitude for the opportunity, Velip called it an "honour" to represent Goa at the national platform. Describing the selection process as highly competitive, she said, Being among the few chosen students was a proud achievement. I never imagined I would get the chance to meet the Prime Minister and speak with him personally. It is something I will always remember."

Velip said the most memorable part of her visit was speaking directly with the Prime Minister. "He listened patiently and gave us encouragement to stay focused and confident in our studies," she said.

Her school, teachers, and family have celebrated her participation in the event, recognising it as a moment of pride. The headmistress and staff of Government High School Morpirla commended her for representing the institution and the State.

Exploring Chicalim's wetlands: Villagers, students walk to protect pond ecosystem

Demonstrate the effectiveness of collaborative approaches to environmental conservation

Team Herald

MARGAO: To mark World Wetlands Day 2025, the Chicalim Youth Farmers Club (CYFC) orchestrated an educational programme exploring the vital pond ecosystems of Chicalim recently.

The event, which aligned with this year's theme "Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future," brought together 40 villagers and students, including officials such as Chicalim Biodiversity Management Committee (BMC) Chairman Rui Costa Araujo and panch members Roman Vaz and Francisco Nunes.

The programme, supported by the Goa State Council of Science and Technology, was a collaborative effort between CYFC, Regina Mundi School, the Diocesan Commission of Ecology Goa, and the Biodiversity Management Committee of Chicalim.

The programme underscored the vital link between local communities and sustainable resource



Students and locals during the educational programme exploring the vital pond ecosystem of Chicalim

management, demonstrating the effectiveness of collaborative approaches to environmental conservation.

Dr Fr Bolmax Pereira, assistant professor of Botany at St Joseph Vaz College Cortalim, led participants through

an exploration of seven ponds in the Gina - Penta - Deussa ward, sharing valuable insights into their historical significance and unique characteristics.

Locals Juvenio and Lucia Fernandes shared their profound appreciation for the initia-

tive, stating, "We had a walk towards our village ponds, which are great at supporting the land with plants. This is something we have never seen in any other place. We wish that this place should be preserved. If not preserved, our next generation will curse us when they see these treasures only in our PBR and paper."

Sergio Rodrigues, a resident said: "The walk to explore the ponds was truly an eye-opening experience. The beauty of these ecosystems, rich in biodiversity, was both fascinating and educational. However, amid the beauty, there was a disheartening reality—the sight of ongoing construction encroaching upon these wetlands. It was a stark reminder of how urbanisation is threatening these vital ecosystems, which serve as natural water reservoirs and habitats for diverse species."

Alisha Pereira, CYFC treasurer and a teacher at Regina Mundi School, said, "This programme represents a crucial step in raising awareness on the significance of local wetland

ecosystems. We are empowering the locals to become active stakeholders in conservation efforts."

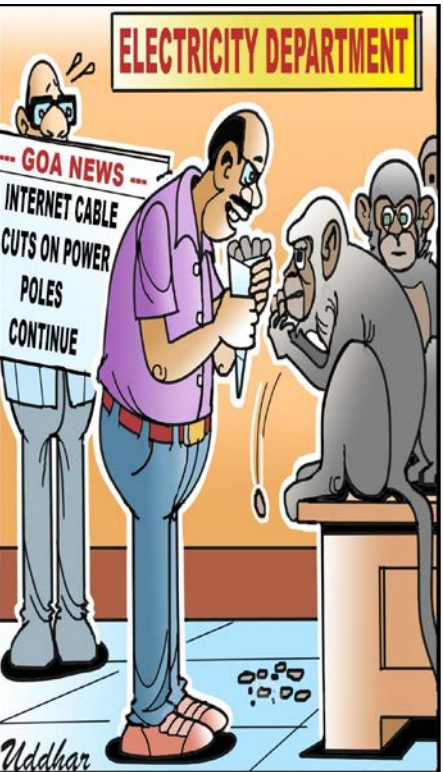
Class V student Adhira Meshram said, "The walk through the seven ponds of Chicalim was a thrilling experience. I learnt about the rich biodiversity that these water bodies hold. The fish, the birds and the mangroves in particular fascinated me a lot."

Class IX student Priyanka Bhukta expressed concern about the ongoing destruction of this fragile ecosystem due to development, while her classmate Rafaad Shaikh highlighted his amazement at the unique irrigation system of the ponds and its benefits to the surrounding area.

Chief guest Rizzeria Pacheco, said, "Chicalim's ancient irrigation system and thriving mangroves are the backbone of its wetlands, sustaining life for generations. But rapid urbanisation threatens this delicate balance. A small effort today ensures a thriving ecosystem tomorrow. Protect Wetlands preserve life."

MAX. TEMP 34.0 °C
MIN. TEMP 22.4 °C

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