

Velsao locals brace for loss as rail workers set to raze centuries-old walls

Residents unable to access homes; say village faces flood risk as workers block drainage, raise road levels

Team Herald

MARGAO: The crisis in Velsao has escalated as residents now face threats to their centuries-old compound walls, with railway workers warning locals that they plan to demolish these structures to gain an additional two metres' space for construction. This new development comes as the Railways continue to dump material near homes under heavy police protection, despite ongoing disputes over land ownership.

"What is scary is the way they feel they can just take our land," said a concerned resident, pointing to the already heightened road level that has made it impossible for villagers to access their homes by vehicle. The situation has become particularly alarming for residents who fear the upcoming monsoon season, as the raised track height and destroyed drainage system threaten to flood their



properties. Velsao-Pale-Issorcim Panchayat Sarpanch Maria Diana Gouveia issued a strongly-worded letter to Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL), demanding the immediate removal of construction material dumped on village roads and in water channels. The letter specifically addresses the area on the western side of the existing railway track between chainage 97/17 and chainage 96/750, warning that villagers' anger is becoming increasingly difficult to contain. "It appears to the ordinary Goan villager that the

rule of law in the land does not exist anymore," says Orville Dourado Rodrigues, founder of Goencho Ekvott (GE). "Senior citizens in the twilight of their lives watch helplessly as the land they tended for over six decades disappears under railway mud. They must even endure taunts from railway labourers who defiantly dump mud against boundary walls that are perhaps over four centuries old, while Goa Police personnel deployed for 'law & order' watch on, abetting these illegalities in broad daylight," he added. The panchayat's letter specifically notes that RVNL

resumed work on February 11, despite a stop-work order issued on January 29, citing pending land title adjudication before the Inspector of Survey and Land Records (ISLR) Court in Margao. The construction has severely disrupted the motorable right of way that villagers have used for decades, which the panchayat describes as a "blatant violation of their human rights."

Residents are particularly concerned about water logging, citing last year's experience when the destroyed drainage system caused severe problems.

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"What will happen when it rains this time? Water will simply gush in as the road and tracks are at a higher height and there is no drainage system either," a worried resident explained.

Road accident kills Navelim man, angry locals demand traffic reforms

Push for diversion of heavy vehicles during peak hours and school timings

Team Herald

MARGAO: A 46-year-old scooter rider, Filip Andrew Pereira from Mandap, Navelim, lost his life on Saturday morning after a car collided with his two-wheeler at Dando, Navelim.

According to Margao police, the accident occurred when car driver Rowan Kayne Rebello was allegedly speeding and driving recklessly while heading from Nagmodem towards Navelim Church. His car hit Pereira's scooter from behind, causing the rider to crash into the windshield before falling onto the road. The impact left Pereira with severe head and body injuries. He was rushed to the South Goa District Hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

Police have registered an offence against Rebello under Sections 281 and 106(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS),

DEMANDS

- Repair non-functional traffic signal at Navelim Church junction
- Deploy traffic policemen at Church and Belem-Navelim intersection

- Divert movement of heavy vehicles from 7 AM to 9 AM and 12 PM to 3.30 PM

2023, for rash and negligent driving endangering human life.

The man's death prompted citizens of Navelim, backed by the National Students Union of India (NSUI), to call for immediate traffic management reforms, particularly focusing on the diversion of heavy vehicles during peak hours. The demand came through a detailed memorandum submitted to PI Sanjay Dalvi of the Margao Traffic Cell recently.

The petition specifically addresses the critical time slots of 7 am to 9 am and 12 pm to 3.30 pm, when traffic congestion reaches its peak, coinciding with

school and college hours. This congestion has been causing significant delays and safety risks, particularly affecting students, parents, and local residents.

The citizens have highlighted several urgent requirements, including the restoration of a defunct traffic signal at the Navelim Church junction and the permanent deployment of traffic police personnel at both the Navelim Church junction and the Belem-Navelim intersection. The traffic signal issue has remained unresolved for years, contributing to the area's traffic management challenges.

WRD directed to build retaining wall at Fatorda landslide site

Team Herald

MARGAO: The South Goa District Collector, Egna Cleetus, has instructed the Water Resources Department (WRD) to take all necessary safety measures, including the construction of a 100-metre retaining wall at Torsanzor in Fatorda, where a landslide occurred last year.

The directive, which was issued to the WRD's Executive Engineer (EE), also mandates implementing precautions to prevent further landslides and protect lives and property. If access to

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This order follows a joint inspection carried out on July 20, 2024, at Rayesh Chambers and Torsanzor to evaluate the landslide damage caused by heavy rainfall and to determine preventive measures. The WRD had

prepared an estimate for the required work but was unable to proceed without official approval from the Disaster Management Authority (DMA).

During that earlier inspection, the WRD (EE) had underscored the urgency of the situation, stressing the immediate need for action to reduce risks to life and property.

Kerala native dies in accident

Team Herald

PERNEM: Unni Ramesh (36) from Kerala, who was riding pillion was killed after he was run over by a truck at Arambol on Friday night. The two-wheeler rider Benedict Richard (28) also from Kerala, sustained minor injuries.

The accident occurred when Gisle Merton, 66, a Norwegian national while proceeding from Arambol to Mandrem rode his motorcycle in rash and negligent manner at Kepkarwada, Arambol, collided against an oncoming two-wheeler ridden Benedict Richard along with pillion rider Unni Ramesh.

SCARS OF PROGRESS

ATISH NAIK



The remains of hundreds of trees felled for the Porvorim elevated corridor lie forgotten at the construction site, serving as a stark reminder of the environmental cost of human growth and greed

Osia Complex to finally get new elevators

Team Herald

MARGAO: The State government has announced plans to install two new lifts at the Osia Commercial Complex in Fatorda which houses various government offices. Law Minister Aleixo Sequeira revealed at the weekly public grievance meeting at the South Goa Collectorate that Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has directed RTO officials to install a second lift in the Osia building.

"The TCP and SGPDA (departments) have agreed to install the first lift in the Osia commercial complex. The second lift will be installed by the RTO and the Transport department will bear the cost of the lift and its installation," Sequeira told the media after the meeting.

The installation aims to benefit citizens from Salcete and beyond who visit various government offices in the multi-storied building, including RTO, TCP, SGPDA, Sales and Commercial Taxes, and District Registrar.

In other developments, the South District Collector has officially notified the yellow-black two-wheeler pilot stand at the Margao KTC bus stand, resolving a long-pending issue.

The Environment Minister also confirmed that the ISL football match at Nehru stadium, Fatorda will proceed as scheduled on March 4.

During the meeting, delegations from several villages including that of Benaulum presented their local issues for resolution.

'Mathias Panaji Run' to promote fitness and community giving

The event will also host a one-kilometre walk for visually impaired and differently abled participants



Team Herald

PANJIM: The Rotary Club of Panaji Mid Town has announced the Mathias Panaji Run 2025, a charity-driven fitness event set to take place on March 2, at Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Stadium, Taleigao. The event, which is scheduled to coincide with the Carnival festivities, aims to blend health, inclusivity, and social impact, offering participants an opportunity to contribute to community welfare.

The event will feature a

10-km timed race, a 5-km walk/run, and a special 1-kilometre walk with students from the National Association for the Blind (NAB) and People with Disabilities (PwD).

Cash prizes worth Rs one lakh will be up for grabs across multiple race categories. Participants are encouraged to embrace the carnival theme, with prizes for the Best Dressed Individual and Best Dressed Group.

The run supports Rotary's flagship social initiatives, including 'Sak-

sharata', which provides educational grants for deserving students; 'Sudharata', which raises financial aid for corrective surgeries; 'Sahayanta', which offers nurse training for elderly care; 'Swachata', which donates water purifiers to schools in remote areas, and 'Sanjivani', through which medical resources such as oxygen concentrators and fowler beds are given to those who need them.

Registration for the run is now open at rotarypanajirun.wixsite.com/panajirotaryrun.

MMC, Church to finalise access deal to resolve Kabrastan deadlock

Team Herald

MARGAO: Environment Minister Aleixo Sequeira has stated that the long-pending issue of the Kabrastan proposed near Margao will be resolved soon, as the Church authorities have agreed to provide road access to the land acquired by the Margao Municipal Council (MMC) for burial grounds at Sonsoddo.

Speaking to reporters here after a meeting at the District Collectorate on Friday, the Minister said the resolution depends on finalizing the agreement between the Church authorities and MMC. "There is an issue whether the Church authorities should sign an easement agreement or make a gift deed to the MMC for the access road. Once this legal issue is resolved, work on the road access to the burial grounds/Kabrastan will be resolved," Sequeira said.

It may be recalled that at an earlier public grievance meeting held at the District Collectorate, Sequeira had met with MMC officials regarding this same issue.

WRD deploys workers to remove scum from Colva Creek

Team Herald

MARGAO: The Water Resources Department (WRD) has initiated efforts to clear the algae that has accumulated in the waters of Colva creek over the past few days.

WRD Executive Engineer Gipson Rebello stated that while awaiting government approval for annual maintenance funds, the department had deployed two workers to clean the stagnant water body. He described the initiative as a temporary measure and noted that once funding is sanctioned, maintenance work would be carried out at regular intervals to prevent the accumulation of algae and effluents.

The condition of the creek has drawn attention in recent days due to the scummy black water spreading onto Colva's popular beach, raising environmental and health concerns.

Benaulum MLA Venzy Viegas who visited the site again to assess the work being carried out also hit back at the comments made by Environment Minister Aleixo Sequeira against him and the Colva panchayat members.

Viegas, who had conducted a joint inspection with the Colva panchayat and WRD earlier this week, said unlike what the Minister claimed that the



MLA and the panch members were just making noise and should have called the Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) instead, stressed that he had got WRD at the site to find a solution and now a temporary solution is being executed.

Viegas, added that GSPCB had already been called in the past by himself and the panchayat and that the more important issue is that Colva creek is finally clean.

MAX. TEMP 33.2 °C
MIN. TEMP 24.0 °C

idharudhar



Here's a peg of water - mix it with the liquor of your choice

STREET VOICES
WHERE GOANS ARE HEARD

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT GOA GOVT WILL BE ABLE TO SAVE MHADEI?

This government is not here to protect the rights of the people. They want to make profit by doing development and construction. Everybody knows how they fight for portfolios, do development and take commissions. This government knows how to fight the elections. Mhadei is not on their agenda. They are not bothered that people do not get water on a daily basis. They say big things such as "har ghar jal, har ghar nal." They claim they have given everything, but nothing is done. Mhadei is a matter of the heart. Mhadei is a matter of our pride, because God has given it to us. Karnataka cannot stop the water. Activists have visited the Kalasa Banduri project, and we have seen how the diversion takes place. We had shown it to the government, but government officials have not even visited the place.

—Sarfaz Ankalji, Social Activist

The Mhadei Bachao Abhiyan has lashed out at the government for its legal and technical teams travelling business class to Delhi and staying in five-star hotels, for the Supreme Court case on the Mhadei's diversion. It also said that unless the Goa Government engages good senior advocates and declares Mhadei as tiger reserve, the river cannot be saved.

The Goa government doesn't seem serious about the issue. The High Court has ordered the creation of a Tiger Reserve to protect Mhadei. If this is done, Karnataka won't be able to divert the water. However, two local MLAs claim there are no tigers in the area, which is unbelievable, especially since they live in Sattari. It raises questions about their motives. Are they supporting Karnataka's interests or trying to pave the way for turning the Western Ghats into a concrete jungle?

—Rajan Ghate, Social Activist

On the Mhadei issue, the government is not at all serious. When the DPR arrived, we had called a meeting at Sankhali on January 16, where it was necessary to oppose the DPR. However, this government failed to do so. In the revised DPR, they even added Surla village, which falls within Goa, and included small bhandaras, to which our government did not object. This government's lack of seriousness is concerning. Furthermore, they have constituted PRAWAH, which was unnecessary. Since Mhadei is Goa's lifeline, diverting its water is unacceptable

—Mahesh Mhambre, Save Mhadei Save Goa

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