

## RESTORE OUR RIGHT OF WAY, VLSAO TELLS RLYS

RVNL attends p'yat meeting, promises revised construction plan factoring in public access and new drainage facility



Velsao residents in discussions with RVNL officials at a meeting held in the panchayat office, on Monday

Team Herald

**VLSAO:** Villagers from Velsao sat at a tense meeting with Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL) officials on Monday with a firm demand: "Restore our right of way".

The meeting at the Velsao-Pale-Issorcim Panchayat office saw the local body directing the Railways to promptly remove the mud fill dumped in front of residents' houses and vacate the land immediately. The meeting was held following mounting complaints over blocked access routes caused by railway expansion work.

After the villagers firmly voiced their concerns, the RVNL officials reconsidered their stance and assured the panchayat that they would submit a revised plan regarding their ongoing construction plans including public access, new drainage facility.

Despite assurances from

RVNL officials that their concerns would be addressed, villagers remain sceptical and have warned of intensified protests if immediate action is not taken regarding their demands.

Three different groups of citizens presented their concerns. The first group consisted of residents from Primeiro Vaddo, Velsao and Pale, living to the right of level crossing 26, facing the sea.

The second group comprised residents of Primeiro Vaddo who reside to the left of level crossing 26. The third group included residents from Issorcim.

Reiterated its stance, the panchayat emphasised that its order remained valid and instructing RVNL to remove the mud obstructing traditional access paths to homes situated opposite the railway track.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

### CONCERNS & DEMANDS

- The residents' primary demand was the immediate removal of the mud heaps which rendered their homes inaccessible
- Claimed the railway tracks are much higher than the level of their houses
- Demanded that the minutes of the meeting be formally recorded and submitted to the Collector to ensure that their grievances and RVNL's commitments were officially documented



- Insisted on the construction of a proper drainage system as the previous one was destroyed during the double-tracking project
- Complained that the absence of drainage led to severe flooding during the past two monsoons

“Until now, RVNL has not provided us with any official plan that we could review and discuss with our villagers. However, RVNL officials have now assured us that they will submit their plan within the next 15 to 20 days. Once we receive it, we will present it to the residents for their feedback. At this stage, we cannot say whether the villagers will accept it or not

– Diana Gouveia, Velsao-Pale-Issorcim Sarpanch

“Before anything else, remove the soil that has been dumped here, blocking our right of way. Let ISLR (Inspector of Survey & Land Records) determine the rightful ownership of the land instead of the railway arbitrarily taking control

– Orville Rodrigues, Goencho Ekvott founder member

## LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL FADES



A rescue operation underway on Monday after a portion of the Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel collapsed, in Nagarkurnool district, Telangana. Trapped for over two days under debris and muck, the chances of survival of the eight persons appear bleak. Relentless efforts by the Indian Army, Navy, NDRF and other agencies have been unable to provide any breakthrough so far

## Outrage in Mandrem over ‘VIP treatment’ for murder accused

Why is accused being ferried in AC private car with tinted glass, ask locals, forcing cops to turn back vehicle



Irate locals gather outside Mandrem Police Station, demand fair probe

Team Herald

**PANJIM:** Mandrem Police's handling of a murder accused led to a face-off on Monday between cops and villagers, who charged the police with giving preferential treatment to 23-year-old Deepan Batra, who allegedly ran over local resident Maria Joao

Fernandes on Friday evening after an argument.

Irate locals who gathered outside the police station claimed Batra was being ferried around in a private air-conditioned vehicle with tinted glass that belonged to a station staffer.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

### THE FACTS OF THE CASE

■ Deepan Batra, 23, from Delhi was arrested for allegedly running over 65-year-old Maria Joao Fernandes following an altercation on Friday night

■ Cops said Batra had been staying in Goa since December 2023. He earlier worked as a chef in Dubai and is currently working on a 'self-funded film project'

■ The police registered a case of murder, but Mandrem PI Sheriff Jacques said in court on Saturday

– the same day of Batra's arrest – that his custody wasn't necessary

■ Batra was remanded in judicial custody on Saturday. But on Monday, police did a flip-flop and asked for police custody, which was granted

■ Since Mandrem PS doesn't have a lock-up, Batra was being taken from there to Pernem PS in a private, air-conditioned car with tinted glass, which led to the face-off with locals

## Maha Cyber Cell quizzes Allahbadia for five hours

PTI, MUMBAI: Maharashtra Cyber officials questioned YouTube Ranveer Allahbadia and Ashish Chanchlani for around five hours on Monday in connection with India's Got Latent show controversy



after they appeared before the agency to record their statements, officials said.

The duo appeared separately at the cyber headquarters in Navi Mumbai after skipping previous summons issued by the agency.

The Maharashtra Cyber and the Mumbai Police are investigating Allahbadia's controversial remarks on Samay Raina's YouTube show, which sparked an obscenity case.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

## Sparks fly in Ladfem over ‘illegal’ road along Goa-Maha border

Locals suspect that the land could be developed and sold as plots; make it clear that they will not allow any mega housing projects

Team Herald

**BICHOLIM:** The residents of Ladfem in Latambarcem Village Panchayat are up in arms over the construction of a road along Goa-Maharashtra border, which they claim as illegal and built without obtaining the necessary permissions.

Suspecting that the road is constructed so that the land could be developed and sold as plots, the residents have now made their stance clear that they will not allow any mega housing projects in the village.

The agitated villagers raised the matter during the gram sabha on Sunday following which, the Latambarcem Sarpanch Rama Gaonkar and panchayat members along with residents visited the site and

“It is surprising that the road has been built without even taking permission from the village panchayat. This issue was earlier brought to the notice of the panchayat and that the Bicholim Deputy Collector had stopped the construction work

– Rama Gaonkar, Latambarcem Sarpanch

conducted a site inspection.

During the inspection, they found that someone had illegally constructed the inter-State road, without obtaining the necessary permissions.

Claiming that the road is being built illegally, the residents alleged that the perpetrators have flouted all rules and kept the entire

government machinery in the dark. Krishnarao Rane, a villager alleged that the road is being built by cutting hill and trees. It was surprising to note that no government authority was aware of the ongoing illegality.

The Sarpanch said, “It is surprising that the road has been built without even taking permission from the village panchayat. This issue was earlier brought to the notice of the panchayat and that the Bicholim Deputy Collector had stopped the construction work”

The sarpanch assured the villagers that he would take up the matter with the higher authorities to find out as to how the road was built.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

### RULES FLOUTED

■ Latambarcem Sarpanch, panchayat members along with residents conducted a site inspection, which revealed that someone has illegally constructed the inter-State road, without obtaining permissions

■ The residents alleged that the perpetrators have flouted all rules and kept the entire govt machinery in the dark

■ Claimed that the road is being built by cutting hill and trees

## Trump firing at least 1,600 USAID staffers worldwide

AP, WASHINGTON: The Trump administration said Sunday that it was placing all but a fraction of staffers at the US Agency for International Development on leave worldwide and eliminating at least 1,600 US-based jobs.

The move was the latest and one of the biggest steps yet toward what President Donald Trump and cost-cutting ally Elon Musk say is their goal of gutting the six-decade-old aid and development agency in a broader campaign to slash the size of the federal government.

The move comes after a federal judge on Friday allowed the administration to move forward with its plan to pull thousands of USAID staffers off the job in the United States and around the world. US District Judge Carl Nichols rejected pleas in a lawsuit from employees to keep temporarily blocking the government's plan.



“As of 11:59 pm EST on Sunday, February 23, 2025, all USAID direct hire personnel, with the exception of designated personnel responsible for mission-critical functions, core leadership and/or specially designated programs, will be placed on administrative leave globally,” according to the notices sent to USAID workers that were viewed by The Associated Press.

Cont on Pg 11 >>

## US federal agencies resist Musk's job justification demand

AP, WASHINGTON: Attorneys for federal workers said Monday in a lawsuit that billionaire Trump adviser Elon Musk had violated the law with his weekend demand that employees explain their accomplishments or risk being fired.

The updated lawsuit, which was filed in federal court in California and was provided to The Associated Press, is trying to block mass layoffs pursued by Musk and President Donald Trump, including any connected to the email distributed by the Office of Personnel Management on Saturday. The office, which functions as a human resources agency for the federal government, said employees needed to detail five things that they did last week by end of day on Monday.

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## 67 illegal businesses are operating near Agonda's turtle nesting sites

Team Herald

**PANJIM:** From north to south, almost every beach in Goa that serves as a nesting site for Olive Ridley turtles, seems to be under siege. Days after a trance music festival was cancelled on Dream Beach in Vagator, 67 business establishments operating illegally have been documented on Agonda beach – both beaches are seasonal havens for the turtles.

The latest update on Agonda was submitted to the Bombay High Court at Goa on Monday during the hearing of a PIL writ petition filed by Aman Gupta. The State government, in its submission to the Court, revealed that the Goa Coastal Zone

The petitioner argued that no structures should be allowed near the turtle nesting site at Agonda Beach, citing the importance of protecting the delicate environment. However, Advocate General Devidas Pangam clarified that no structures have been permitted within the nesting site itself. Pangam stated that the structures in question were built on the landward side of the beach



Management Authority (GCZ-MA) had identified these 67 establishments and issued show cause notices to them for their illegal operations.

The Court, while adjourning the hearing to next week,

directed the government authorities to expedite the process of disposing of the show cause notices.

The petitioner argued that no structures should be allowed near the turtle nesting

site at Agonda Beach, citing the importance of protecting the delicate environment. However, Advocate General Devidas Pangam clarified that no structures have been permitted within the nesting site itself. Pangam stated that the structures in question were built on the landward side of the beach, an area considered to have beach carrying capacity as per the 2017 report, and are therefore permissible by law.

Further, AG Pangam explained that certain structures had been authorized under legal provisions, while the 67 establishments identified by the GCZMA had not received such permissions.

Cont on Pg 11 >>